Fyodor Volkov

SECRETS FROM WHITEHALL and DOWNING STREET

The book deals with
crucial aspects of Anglo-Soviet
relations in the period from 1917 to 1939.
Materials from British government archives
and the latest Soviet documents and studies help to trace
the role of international imperialism in organizing plots,
mutinies, and military and economic interventions
against the Soviet Republic, and in starting
World War II.

PROGRESS Publishers

Fyodor Volkov

SECRETS FROM WHITEHALL and DOWNING STREET

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Ф. Волков

ТАЙНЫ УАЙТХОЛЛА И ДАУНИНГ-СТРИТ

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Foreword to the English-Language Edition

In the center of London, the City, is a quiet little street on which stands a massive building, its exterior darkened by time. Here the archives of the British government were housed, the principal official acts and documents issued over several centuries by the kings and queens of England, Parliament, the successive governments, the Foreign Office, British intelligence, and many other institutions of the British empire.

Until 1967 it was strictly forbidden under British law to publish important state and diplomatic documents less than fifty years old. The period has now been shortened to thirty years.

The declassified documents are of great value for students of British domestic and foreign policy and of Soviet-British relations. While conducting research in Great Britain's Public Record Office, I was able to obtain photocopies of several hundred pages of formerly secret documents. These, together with documents relating to Soviet foreign policy and other sources and material, became the basis of the present work. *Secrets from Whitehall and Downing Street* shows the international significance of the Great October Socialist Revolution, which opened a new era in world history, and of the assistance the British working class gave to the newly formed Soviet republic. It also tells how British ruling circles, the politicians who do the bidding of the monopolists and bankers of the City—the real masters—responded to the October Revolution. The British imperialists, together with the capitalists of France, America, Japan, and other countries, organized and actively participated in intervention against the newly emerged Soviet state.

Numerous documents drawn up by British authorities at the highest level show once again how the international

forces of imperialism conspired to divide Soviet Russia into spheres of intervention. At first they acted openly, using their own armed forces. In the second stage they operated covertly, working through smaller countries bordering on Soviet Russia and the forces of counterrevolution within Russia itself.

The documentary record shows how and to what extent international reaction lent its aid to generals Krasnov, Kaledin, Alekseyev, Denikin, Yudenich, Miller, and Wrangel, to Admiral Kolchak, and to Poland's ruling bourgeoisie and landowners. It proves irrefutably that the forces of international imperialism, in particular the British, were directly involved in organizing the revolt of the Czechoslovak Corps. It also sheds new light on the Lockhart conspiracy of 1918. A few facts are published here for the first time.

When armed intervention against Soviet Russia failed, the imperialists changed tactics. They did not renounce military interference; the effort might be renewed whenever the time seemed right. Meanwhile, they launched an economic intervention aimed at breaking the state monopoly on foreign trade and exacting economic concessions. Lloyd George, who was then prime minister, admitted as much. The Anglo-Soviet talks of 1920-1921, which concluded with Britain's "quasi-recognition" of the Soviet government, offer further evidence. One of the most important attempts at economic intervention was made at the Genoa conference of 1922.

But these efforts too failed. The Soviet delegation—the first ever to participate in an international forum—succeeded in breaking the capitalist powers' united front and concluded the Rapallo Treaty with Germany. The Genoa Conference, and after it the Hague Conference, put an end to the idea of a collective agreement between Soviet Russia and the capitalist countries and began the practice of bilateral agreements.

The capitalists had seen both military and economic intervention fail. They stood to profit from trade with Soviet Russia. What was more, they needed to find a way out of the post-war economic and financial crisis. In the end they were forced to set about normalizing relations with the Soviet government. Britain was the first major capitalist country to establish full diplomatic relations. The present work analyzes that step in detail, and also the factors that helped Soviet Russia win broader recognition.

New documents from the British archives, together with Soviet archival materials and other sources, give a fuller picture of the attempts British Conservatives made in the mid-1920s to undermine relations with the USSR. To this end the Conservatives tried to put together an anti-Soviet bloc in the guise of the "Big Locarno" (including Germany), the "Little Locarno" (the Baltic countries: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland), the "Northern Locarno" (the Scandinavian countries), and the "Balkan Locarno" (Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, Albania, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia).

The machinations of British politicians caused disturbances in the USSR's relations with other countries. These reached their peak in 1927. In that year there were attacks on the Soviet embassy in Peking and the consulates in Shanghai and Tianjing (Tientsin). The headquarters of ARCOS, a British-Soviet joint-stock company, were raided, and also the USSR's trade mission in London, the British government broke off diplomatic relations with the USSR. And P. L. Voikov, the Soviet ambassador to Poland, was murdered.

The present work analyzes the reasons for the failure of the Conservatives' anti-Soviet policy in 1924-1929. The factors at work included, on the one hand, the growth of the political, economic, and military might of the USSR, its foreign policy of peace, and the determination of its working people to defend the world's first socialist state; and on the other, the inter-imperialist contradictions that made it impossible for the Conservatives to create a united anti-Soviet bloc, the interest some British industrialists and merchants had in strengthening economic ties with the USSR, and the competition among capitalists for Soviet markets.

The failure of military intervention, economic intervention, and blockade, and the establishment of normal diplomatic relations between Soviet Russia and the capitalist countries was due in no small measure to the aid of the international proletariat. Proletarian internationalism was also one of the most important factors in the success of Soviet foreign policy.

With the help of previously unpublished documents, this book shows how the Nazis gained ascendancy in Germany, setting the stage for the Second World War in Europe. The Western powers actually encouraged the aggressors, hoping that Germany, Italy, and Japan would turn on the Soviet

Union. They also used the League of Nations towards this end. Britain and France refused to help create a system of collective security in Europe. At Munich, Czechoslovakia was sacrificed to Hitler as the price for Nazi Germany's attacking the USSR. This book tells the whole story, and also gives a detailed analysis of Chamberlain's and Daladier's double-dealing at the Anglo-Franco-Soviet political and military talks in the spring and summer of 1939, on the very threshold of the war. Their purpose was to show that the USSR was without allies, that Germany would risk nothing in moving against it. The game was the same as at Munich.

As mentioned above, I have made extensive use of documents from the British Public Record Office, including stenographic records of cabinet meetings between 1917 and 1939 and documents from the Foreign Office, the Admiralty, the Imperial General Staff, etc., as well as American, German, and other publications. The sources on which I have drawn also include the annual conference documents and other materials issued by the Labour, Conservative, and Liberal parties, and by Britain's trade unions; the memoirs of Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, David Lloyd George, Austen Chamberlain, George Buchanan, Robert H. Bruce Lockhart, and other politicians and diplomats; and studies by British and American scholars: Harold Temperlay, Ernest L. Woodward, Edward H. Carr, Louis Fischer, Herbert Schumann, Charles Mowat, Harold Nicholson, and many others.

My field is British foreign policy and Soviet-British relations, and these constitute the main focus of attention here. Nevertheless, the materials presented also have an intimate bearing on important aspects of other countries' international relations and foreign policy.

* * *

The question of the political relations between the USSR and Great Britain is closely bound up with every other major international question and with the whole complex of relations between socialist and capitalist countries. The interests of the USSR and Britain interact in different parts of the world and in different spheres. Peace and security in Europe, and throughout the world, depend in no small degree on the character of the relationship between these two countries and their agreement, or lack of agreement, on how fundamental international questions should be handled.

Every improvement in Soviet-British political relations has made for a healthier political climate in Europe and worldwide. Conversely, every worsening of these relations has had a negative effect.

The Soviet Union and Britain have many political and economic interests in common, chief among which is preventing another disastrous war and promoting peace throughout the world. The close tie between political and economic interests is a recurrent theme in the history of Soviet-British relations, and indeed of the Soviet Union's relations with all the capitalist countries. In 1921, Britain and the Soviet Russia concluded a treaty dealing in equal measure with trade and politics, giving *de facto* recognition to the Soviet government. Diplomatic relations were established in 1924. In both cases, a bettering of political relations created favourable conditions for broader economic ties. An analysis of Soviet-British relations shows that each time British reactionaries have conducted a policy of intervention or of provoking conflicts with the USSR, it has been Britain's own interests that suffered most. The importance of foreign trade in the British economy is well known.

The alternating ups and downs in Soviet-British relations result from the unending struggle of two tendencies in London's diplomacy. One of these tendencies is hostile to the USSR; it looks mainly to military attacks, to an aggravation of relations. The other looks to cooperation with the USSR in international affairs, to a broadening of mutually beneficial trade and other contacts, in keeping with Britain's own economic interests. It is the influence of these tendencies and the predominance of one or another at different moments in history that accounts for the many zigzags and hesitations in Britain's policy towards the Soviet Union.

Chapter 1

The Beginning of Armed Intervention by the British Imperialists

"From now on, a new phase in the history of Russia begins." [1] These impassioned words were spoken more than sixty years ago by Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the proletarian revolution, in an address to the Petrograd Soviet. The October Revolution opened a new era in international relations.

Class and national oppression was abolished. Russia made a revolutionary withdrawal from the imperialist war that embroiled Europe. The inequitable treaties concluded by the tsarist regime were repudiated. The new government proclaimed the principles of equality and sovereignty for all, and adopted a policy of peace and non-interference in other countries' affairs. All this won for Soviet Russia, from the first days of its existence, the sympathy of the broad masses of working people throughout the world, who were inspired by it in their struggle against the imperialist war. There was an upsurge of the revolutionary struggle in Europe and other parts of the globe.

The October Revolution opened an area of proletarian revolutions in the centers of imperialism. At the same time, it marked a turning point in the national-liberation movement. The Russian revolution aggravated and intensified the general crisis of the world capitalist system, shaking its very foundations in colonial and dependent countries. This of course provoked a negative reaction in the ruling circles of Great Britain and other capitalist countries.

On November 8, 1917, at 03.50 in the morning, British Ambassador George Buchanan dispatched an urgent telegram to London from Petrograd. As soon as it was received, the members of the War Cabinet and the king were informed of its contents. There had been a revolution in Petrograd. Kerensky's provisional government had fallen dur-

ing the night, and the "All-Russia Soviet" (the Second Congress of Soviets) was "forming its own government" (of Bolsheviks). Buchanan said the Bolsheviks controlled half the city; in fact, by the morning of October 25 (November 7) all Petrograd, except for the Winter and Mariinsky palaces, was in the hands of the revolutionary proletariat and the soldiers.

On October 25, at ten in the morning, an appeal bearing Lenin's signature and titled "To the Citizens of Russia!" was published by the Revolutionary Military Committee. "The Provisional Government has been deposed," the appeal said. "State power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies." [2] On the afternoon of October 25, an extraordinary session of the Petrograd Soviet opened at Smolny. From its tribune, Lenin informed the whole world that a workers' and peasants' revolution had taken place. [3]

In his report to London concerning the last hours of the provisional government, General Alfred Knox, the British military attache in Petrograd, wrote that by the morning of October 25 it was clear the provisional government had no significant support. The entire city was in the hands of the insurgents; the only exception was the Winter Palace, where Kishkin, a minister of the provisional government and its temporary dictator, had gathered his last adherents around him.

The Winter Palace was taken in the first hours after midnight. The members of the provisional government were arrested and removed to the Peter and Paul Fortress. The armed uprising in Petrograd had come to a triumphant conclusion.

Kerensky had fled to Pskov, in the Northern Front's area of operation, on October 25. According to Buchanan's report, he sent a letter to the American ambassador saying that neither he nor his colleagues and adherents recognized the new government, and that he hoped to return in three or four days with enough troops to regain control. [4] Buchanan was less optimistic. He wrote that Kerensky was "no longer the master of the situation" and that he had "completely discredited himself." [5]

In the first few days after the victory of the October Revolution, British politicians, diplomats, and military men were unanimous in declaring that it would prove nothing more than a fleeting episode in the history of Russia. The only

point of disagreement was how many days, weeks, or months the Soviets might stay in power. Ambassador Buchanan had no doubt the Bolshevik government would collapse within two months. General Knox thought the time might be a little longer. The leaders of the Labour Party, especially Ramsay MacDonald, were full of sympathy for Kerensky, who was quick to send MacDonald a telegram about the recapture of Petrograd and the provisional government's return to power.

The attempt by Kerensky and General Krasnov to stage a counterrevolution raised great hopes among the imperialists. "The liquidation of the Bolshevik adventure is only a matter of days or even hours," *The Daily Chronicle* said.[6] Buchanan's unfounded report that the Kremlin had been taken by Kerensky's forces in Moscow, and the Bolsheviks had surrendered, occasioned general rejoicing among the bourgeoisie in London and Paris.[7]

But their elation was premature. The Cossacks fighting for Kerensky and Krasnov were utterly defeated at the Pulkovo heights on November 13, and the enemies of the revolution were beaten in Moscow as well. Now Buchanan reported to London: "Situation is becoming more and more hopeless. Bolsheviks are masters of situation."[8] He said the new revolutionary party had achieved complete victory in Moscow and Petrograd.

A secret report the war cabinet received from the political intelligence section of the Foreign Office gave an even more realistic account. It said the Bolshevik government was more stable than any other at that time, and noted how it had successfully dealt with various problems of war and revolution that the provisional government had tried in vain to resolve.

It was only the Bolshevik Party that brought peace, bread, and freedom to the workers and peasants of Russia.

The Bolsheviks' Struggle for Peace

After the victory of the October Revolution, the Soviet government, conducting a policy of peace, sought to establish normal political and economic relations with the capitalist countries on the basis of full equality and mutual respect for national interests. Lenin's Decree on Peace, calling for a peace without annexations or indemnities, provoked an outpouring of hatred, especially among Britain's bour-

geoisie and in the Conservative and Labour press. The decree was published in the Soviet press and broadcast on the radio; it was an official peace proposal made to all belligerents on both sides. Nonetheless, the British foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, declared in Parliament that no peace proposals had been received from the Soviet government.[9] The semi-official organ of the Conservative Party, *The Daily Telegraph*, unwittingly revealed the untruth of this claim. "Another very strong point in the Bolshevik case," it noted, "is the demand for immediate peace."[10] On November 10, *The Times* was forced to publish the Decree on Peace adopted by the Second Congress of Soviets.

Britain's ruling circles resorted to subterfuge of this sort in an attempt to keep Soviet Russia from concluding a universal peace treaty. They wanted, at whatever cost, to continue the predatory, imperialist war that was bringing them huge profits on sales of arms. They intentionally distorted the facts, claiming that Soviet Russia was proposing not a universal but a separate peace with Germany.

Russia's workers and peasants did not want to fight for the interests of the Western imperialists any longer. General Knox wrote in a report to London on November 22, 1917, that the Russian forces would now insist on an armistice. Most of the men wanted to go home. "No power on earth will make the Russian soldier fight again."[11] Four days later, Knox reported that nine tenths of the Russian people seemed determined to have peace, and that it would be beyond the powers of any government to conduct a policy that ran counter to the will of such an overwhelming majority.

F. O. Lindley, the British chargé d'affaires in Petrograd, suggested that Britain's political leaders relieve Russia of its obligation to go on fighting the war. He wrote that in demanding peace the Bolsheviks had the support of the whole people with only insignificant exceptions.

F. Arnott, the director of Vauxhall Motor Limited, visited Petrograd in November of 1917. Hopes that the Bolsheviks would remain in power only a few days, he said later, were completely unrealistic. It was certain that ninety per cent of the Russians were inclined to support the Bolsheviks, especially on the questions of land and peace. Arnott thought that a universal peace was much closer than readers of English newspapers were being led to believe.

The great majority of British politicians and diplomats,

and the bourgeois press, took an entirely different view. They demanded that the war be pursued to a "victorious conclusion." Ambassador Buchanan exerted himself in this direction too. On November 20, 1917, he met secretly in the British embassy with two members of the ousted provisional government, Chaikovsky and Skobelev. The former complained that the army wanted peace, but said he himself had always advocated a fight to the finish. In reply Buchanan said that Britain, after all its sacrifices in the war, could not be expected to make a premature peace that would provide no guarantees for the future. He reported to London that he thought it highly important to keep Russia in the war as long as possible.

The Allied powers and the USA had indicated, by ignoring the Soviet peace proposal, that they did not recognize the new government *de facto* or *de jure*. Britain officially formulated its attitude towards Soviet Russia soon after. Lord Robert Cecil, the assistant foreign secretary, declared in the House of Commons on November 24, 1917, that Britain did not recognize the Soviet government as a subject under international law and had instructed its ambassador accordingly. A similar resolution was adopted at the Paris conference of the Allied Supreme Council: "Allied Governments should have no relations at present with the Bolshevik Government." [12] In lieu of a reply to the Soviet peace proposal, Buchanan called a meeting in Petrograd on November 22. American Ambassador David Francis, French Ambassador Noulens, and the ambassadors and emissaries of several other countries were present. It was decided that the Soviet government should not be officially recognized and its peace proposal should be ignored. [13]

In November of 1917 a group of Russian counterrevolutionaries held a secret meeting in the Russian embassy in London and created a special committee headed by General Germonius, who had been one of tsarist Russia's military representatives to Britain. The main goal of this committee was to "struggle against all elements advocating separate peace" and to "help those elements in Russia who are against a separate peace." [14] Telegrams declaring the committee's intentions were sent to Kerensky, Kaledin, Milyukov, Dutov, Shcherbachev, and other Russian counterrevolutionary generals and politicians.

Faced with these circumstances, the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR called on the soldiers and sailors

of the revolutionary army and navy to take the work of peace-making into their own hands. The representatives of Britain, France, and the USA had refused to recognize the new government and begin negotiations for a universal peace. Now the Soviet government was forced to undertake negotiations for a separate peace with Germany. At the end of November, General Knox reported to London that the Russian army and the Russian people would wait no longer. They would begin negotiations, he said, and if need be would begin them alone. Negotiations with Germany began on December 2, 1917; a preliminary armistice was signed on December 15. The Soviet government adjourned the subsequent talks several times and appealed to the Allied powers to join in. British, American, and French diplomats conveyed these appeals to their governments on several occasions.

Britain was hoping to impose its own plan for a "settlement." The Imperial General Staff worked out a program for the peace talks between Russia and Germany that was intended to weaken Russia; and British diplomats in Petrograd worked to push it through. It was a program of annexation, of partition. Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, the Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia were to be taken from Russia under the guise of granting them "independence." All factories, depots, and armaments that could not be removed were to be destroyed. All Russian ships were to be handed over to Sweden, a neutral country, for internment. Rail lines in the demilitarized zone were to be rendered unusable.

Early in January of 1918, Germany's refusal to make peace on a democratic basis caused an interruption of the talks. Buchanan lost no time in reporting to the British government that the negotiations with Germany had fallen through, that the Soviet government would not accept an annexationist peace, and that if there were no peace the government would not last long.

British politicians, in order to halt the peace talks at Brest-Litovsk and turn the force of German imperialism against the still unsteady Soviet republic, were even willing, as a matter of form, to give *de facto* recognition to the new government. Bruce Lockhart, an unofficial British agent in Petrograd, approached the Soviet government through the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, offering arms, ammunition, and military instructors if Russia were to continue the war against Germany. The British imperialists

were willing to pay as much as a hundred roubles for every Russian soldier! But the falseness of such promises is evident from what Balfour, the British foreign secretary, told Parliament on January 16, 1918: "His Majesty's Government does not recognise the Petrograd Administration as a *de jure* or *de facto* Government." [15]

The bourgeoisie of Britain and France wanted to keep Russia from making a separate peace with Germany. In the meantime they did not entirely break off relations with the Soviet government, hoping that it would resume hostilities. In a memorandum to the War Cabinet dated December 10, Balfour argued that regardless of what some of the cabinet's members felt, it would be best for England to avoid an open break with Soviet Russia for as long as possible. It was his opinion that to break openly with the Bolsheviks would be to thrust them into the arms of Germany.

On December 22, Lord Milner, a member of the War Cabinet, and Lord Cecil, the assistant foreign secretary, met in Paris with the French Prime Minister Clemenceau and Pichon, the French foreign minister. It was decided that relations with the Soviet government should be conducted through unofficial agents. [16] Early in January the British government appointed the spy Lockhart as its unofficial diplomatic representative—the head of the British mission. Shortly thereafter Buchanan returned to England.

The War Cabinet sent Lockhart special instructions saying that "it is common ground that full and complete recognition is at present impossible, and also that a complete rupture is very undesirable." [17] The British government was still hoping Russia would continue the war with Germany, and therefore wanted to "defer a break with the government at Petrograd, if break there must be, as long as possible." Lockhart was to steer a middle course between rupture and recognition; diplomatic relations between Britain and Soviet Russia were to remain "semi-official." [18] Hence Lockhart's position of a "political agent."

General Knox saw things differently. He thought England should withdraw its military mission and give full and open support to the anti-Bolshevik elements in the south of Russia, and that American or Japanese forces should be sent to Siberia. Edward Derby, the secretary of state for war, likewise wanted to recall the mission to the provisional government—a hundred British officers headed by General Poole. The War Cabinet, however, went about things in its own

way. It sent its officers to help the counterrevolutionary Russian forces massing in the south of the country, in Siberia, and in the Baltic region.

The imperialists of Britain, France, and the United States would not consider a general peace among the belligerent powers, and thereby forced the Soviet government to conclude a separate peace with Germany. As Lenin wrote: "It was the Anglo-French and the American bourgeoisie who refused to accept out proposal; it was they who even refused to talk to us about a general peace!" [19] The talks at Brest-Litovsk concluded with the signing, on March 3, 1918, of a peace treaty. Despite its astoundingly harsh and unjust terms, the treaty gave the new government time to strengthen its hold on power. By taking advantage of the conflicts within the capitalist camp, Soviet Russia was able to ready itself for the battles against domestic and foreign counterrevolution during the Civil War.

Britain and the other capitalist countries refused to join Soviet Russia at the peace talks. They protested the treaty of Brest-Litovsk and later tried to block its ratification. All these actions showed the hostility that the ruling classes in the imperialist countries felt towards the world's first socialist state. From the first days of Soviet power, they began a pitiless struggle against the young republic.

The Imperialists Prepare for Intervention

Preparations to attack Soviet Russia began practically at once after the October Revolution. The main goal of the intervention by the imperialist powers was to destroy the Soviet state, the seat of the worldwide proletarian revolution. Lenin wrote: "The British and Japanese capitalists want to restore the power of the landowners and capitalists in Russia in order to share with them the booty captured in the war; they want to shackle the Russian workers and peasants to British and French capital, to squeeze out of them interest on the billions advanced in loans, and to extinguish the fire of socialist revolution which has broken out in our country and which is threatening to spread across the world." [20]

No sooner had the news of the October Revolution reached Britain than calls for intervention began to be heard in Parliament and the bourgeois press. *The Daily Chronicle*, the semi-official organ of the Liberal Party, was not to be outdone by the reactionary Conservative papers. Writing

that a civil war was "apparently inevitable," it added that it was "better that it should come now." [21]

The first concrete suggestions that the British government should begin intervention against the Soviet republic were made by Ambassador Buchanan, Bruce Lockhart, General Knox, General Barter (head of the British military mission), and later by General Poole (who headed the Allied intervention in the north of Russia and was subsequently sent to assist Denikin) and others. Government figures, politicians, and diplomats zealously advocated intervention. Among them were Winston Churchill (he spoke of stifling Bolshevism in its cradle), who was then a member of Lloyd George's cabinet, and became its secretary of state for war at the end of 1918; Lord Alfred Milner, also a member of the War Cabinet, who became secretary of state for war in April of 1918; and Lord Curzon, an implacable enemy of Soviet Russia.

The formal decision to begin armed intervention in Russia was made at the Paris conference of the Allied Supreme Council, which was called at the end of November 1917, to work out a plan for overthrowing the Soviet government. Just ten days after the triumph of the October Revolution, General Barter wrote to the British government of the need for active support to the Cossacks; the fugitive Kerensky, and also Alekseyev and Milyukov, were already on their way to the Cossacks' headquarters. On November 27, Barter indicated in a telegram to the War Cabinet that the only hope of setting things right and driving out the Bolsheviks was military intervention, bringing in troops from abroad. The War Cabinet lost no time in incorporating these recommendations into its resolutions.

The Cossack counterrevolutionaries on the Don led by General Kaledin were the focus of the greatest danger. They established contacts with counterrevolutionary Cossacks in the Kuban, Terek, and Astrakhan regions, with the Ukrainian Rada, and with ataman Dutov. Kaledin, Alekseyev, and Kornilov began to form armies of "volunteers," which received military aid and subsidies from Britain, the USA, and France.

General Knox met repeatedly with Kaledin during this time. He reported to London that generals Kornilov, Denikin, Alekseyev, and Erdeli, and also the Cadet* leaders Milyukov, Rodzyanko, and Guchkov, were with Kaledin on

* Cadets: Also known as Constitutional Democrats.

the Don. Kaledin's forces, the report said, were very small: about 5,000 infantrymen and 10,000 cavalrymen. Knox was worried that if Kaledin did not receive gold and guidance from the Allies he would be crushed in his struggle with the rest of Russia. In November of 1917, with the help of the Cossack upper crust and money and arms from the imperialist powers, Kaledin was able to seize Rostov and Taganrog.

The Secret Decisions of the British Cabinet

On December 3, 1917, the War Cabinet held a secret meeting in London. There was discussion of giving aid to Kaledin and the Ukrainian Rada, and it was decided that "assistance should be forthcoming ... to support any responsible body in Russia [i.e., counterrevolutionaries—*F.V.*] willing to oppose actively the Maximalist movement [i.e., the Bolsheviks—*F.V.*]." [22]

At a cabinet meeting held on December 7, the government of Lloyd George decided that the Bolsheviks should be regarded as avowed enemies. At a regular session of the War Cabinet on December 10 (Protocol 17), the question of preparing for intervention against Soviet Russia was considered once again. That same day, Winston Churchill, then minister of munitions in Lloyd George's cabinet, drew up a government memorandum indicating the need to muster counterrevolutionary forces for the fight against the Soviet government.

"It seems important at this stage for the Allies [England and France—*F.V.*] to foster the creation of a loyal Russian force composed of Russian officials and subjects in Allied countries," Churchill wrote. "A considerable number of men selected individually from the Russian troops in France might, I am informed, be released." There were also numerous army and naval officers whose services could be of use. Churchill proposed putting Admiral Kolchak at the head of these forces. [23]

The Imperial General Staff worked on these recommendations and on December 12 presented a detailed note concerning "countries" that might offer resistance to the Bolshevik government. These included Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, the Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, and the Cossack territories of the Don, Kuban, and Terek, Astrakhan, Orenburg, the Urals, and Siberia. The General Staff thought

these "countries" could raise an army of 2,825,000 to fight against Soviet Russia.

On December 14, the War Cabinet authorized the Foreign Office to give funds for the support of counterrevolution in Russia. "Mr. Williams and Captain Noel were sent from Petrograd with the concurrence of Sir G. Buchanan to get into touch with the Ukrainians and with Kaledin as Hetman and Cossacks."[24] Each man carried ten million pounds sterling with him. General Shore was sent to Armenia to investigate the question of aid for the counterrevolutionary General Averianov. On December 19, a meeting was held in the Foreign Office to discuss the practical details of financial support for Russian counterrevolutionaries. The young Soviet republic was facing a serious threat.

England and France Agree on Joint Intervention

As mentioned above, lords Milner and Cecil met in Paris on December 22, 1917, with Clemenceau, Pichon, and Marshal Foch. They adopted a detailed plan for supporting Russian counterrevolutionary forces in the Ukraine, on the Don, and in Siberia and Finland.[25] They also came to an understanding on England and France financing the counterrevolutionaries and on sending "agents and officers to advise and support the provincial governments and their armies."[26] The resulting agreement on joint intervention and the spheres of influence in Russia was signed on December 23. Its text follows:

Terms of the Convention Agreed at Paris, dated 23rd December, 1917.

Present:

Clemenceau, President du Conseil.	Lord Milner. A.
Pichon, Minister for Foreign Affairs.	Lord Robert Cecil.
Cambon, French Ambassador in London.	Major-General Sir G. M. W. Macdonogh.
Marshal Foch.	Sir George Clerk.
Margerie, Political Director, Foreign Office.	Lieutenant-Colonel Spears.
	Interpreter Captain Kisch.

1. The action directed by France will proceed north of the Black Sea (against the enemy).

The action directed by England will proceed south of the Black Sea (against the Turks).

II. General Alekseyev at Novocherkassk has proposed to execute a program aimed at organizing an army to resist the enemy, and France has accepted this program, allocated a credit of one hundred million for it, and called for the organization of an inter-Allied control commission. It will be possible to continue the execution of this program until new arrangements have been made in agreement with England.

III. With the above reservation, the zones of influence of each government will be as follows:

English zone: Cossack territories, the Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia, and Kurdistan.
French zone: Bessarabia, the Ukraine, and the Crimea.

IV. Expenses are to be shared under the management of a central inter-Allied body. [27]

Later modifications to this agreement, and the way it was put into practice during the Civil War, broadened England's "sphere of influence"—i.e., its area of intervention—to include Central Asia and the north of Russia from Murmansk to the Urals.

The US State Department worked out an even more outrageous plan for the dismemberment of Soviet Russia. The American imperialists wanted to set up bourgeois puppet "states" along the Baltic coast and in Byelorussia, the Ukraine, the Crimea, and Central Asia. On December 24, 1917, representatives of England and France issued a note promising financial assistance for all Russian counterrevolutionaries. [28]

Intervention began without any declaration of war, although in fact merciless war was waged against Soviet Russia. At a later date Churchill, giving way to an impulse towards frankness, wrote: "Were they [the Allies—*F.V.*] at war with Soviet Russia? Certainly not; but they shot Soviet Russians at sight." [29]

The first overt step towards intervention was taken in January of 1918, when the Romanian oligarchy, with the consent of the political leaders of England and France, moved to occupy Bessarabia. The Romanian army disarmed the revolutionary Russian troops on the former Romanian front.

Soldiers were starved, and commissars shot. The Council of People's Commissars protested these illegal actions, and briefly held the Romanian ambassador under arrest. When this failed to have any effect, the Council broke off diplomatic relations with Romania.

Plans for Broader Intervention

In March of 1918, General Poole presented to the War Cabinet a detailed plan for joint intervention by England, France, the USA, and Japan against the young Soviet republic. Poole wrote that in sending military forces against Soviet Russia the Allies must follow a well considered program agreed on in advance by all. He suggested that such an action be justified by declaring it to be aimed at restoring law and order in Russia, keeping Germany from gaining complete control over the whole country, and doing everything possible to save the Russian people from famine.

As for how General Poole meant to "save" the Russian people from famine and the Germans, he clearly indicated that to be effective the influence of England and France must be based on force. The Allied military forces were to help restore all "local authorities"—i.e., the rule of the bourgeoisie and landowners.

Poole suggested that the area where each country would intervene be established in keeping with the agreement on Allied spheres of influence in Russia. Combined British and French forces, under British command, were to be sent to the northern part of European Russia, accompanied by American and Japanese military missions. Two expeditionary forces, each consisting of two or three warships and a small body of troops for capturing rail lines, would go to Murmansk and Archangel. Poole also urged that the Allies gain military control over the south of Russia. In Siberia and the Far East, action would be taken by joint American and Japanese forces. A Japanese landing in Vladivostok would undoubtedly be a brilliant move. In conclusion, Poole argued that if such policies were not adopted and energetically pursued Britain might arrive "too late to collect a fair share of the best of the commercial undertakings which will be open for Development."[30]

Other documents in the archives of the British government show that members of the War Cabinet, such as Lloyd George, Churchill, Milner, Curzon, and Balfour, were no

less zealous than the generals and diplomats in advocating intervention against Soviet Russia. Curzon, in particular, vigorously supported Poole's suggestions for the occupation of Murmansk and Archangel, and for action in Siberia by Japan and other countries.

In mid-January 1918, Milner sent a note to Balfour bringing him up to date on certain discussions, which had taken place in the War Cabinet during the foreign secretary's absence, concerning Japan's entry into Vladivostok and the overall situation in Siberia. "It is Japan," Milner wrote, "who should take action *on behalf of the Allies.* Japan certainly will intervene whether the other Allies like it or not." [31] Milner and other members of the cabinet had already made up their minds for intervention. Their only worry was that Japan might seize the riches of Siberia for itself alone. The same feeling was reflected in Balfour's reply to Milner. There was concern in the British government, he wrote, that once Japan entered Eastern Siberia it would lay permanent claim to the territory. Balfour saw Vladivostok as the only doorway to Siberia; whoever controlled the Trans-Siberian railroad controlled Siberia as well. The operation, he argued, must therefore be a joint one. It was within the power of the Allies, if they acted immediately, to make themselves masters of Siberia. At the same time, the War Office and the Foreign Office, in a memorandum to the government, made the startling suggestion that Japan should land a large force in Siberia and "occupy the whole length of the Siberian railway from Vladivostok to the borders of European Russia." [32]

General Knox, still in Russia, reported to London that in his opinion the only realistic hope of seizing a large stretch of the Trans-Siberian railroad, to Chelyabinsk or Samara, lay with the Japanese. He suggested that Allied military representatives accompany the Japanese forces.

At the end of January, Balfour appealed through his ambassadors to the governments of France, the USA, and Italy, urging them to aid the counterrevolutionaries in Siberia, in the south of Russia, on the Kuban, and in the Caucasus. He said that the Allies were prepared to invite Japan to take part, and that Japan was prepared to accept the invitation. If the plan succeeded, it would contribute greatly to the Allied cause in Russia.

On February 2, 1918, Balfour reported to the War Cabinet and the king on the progress of British and Allied in-

tervention against Soviet Russia. The Allies had sent money and advisers to the Ukraine. "Local resistance to the forces of disorder [meaning the Bolsheviks—*F.V.*] had been organized with some success." And every effort had been made to provide General Semenov's government with money and arms.[33] The same day, Balfour sent a telegram to Colonel House, President Wilson's personal adviser and right-hand man, asking for assistance to Semenov.

The British cabinet was particularly interested in beginning overt intervention in the north of Russia and seizing Murmansk and Archangel. General Poole drew up a special memorandum, circulated within the War Cabinet, concerning the need for immediate British military action to capture the port of Murmansk. He expressed hope that Trotsky would lend his sincere support to such a move. This plan was adopted by the cabinet and soon put into action. Poole was not mistaken about Trotsky, whose treasonable policies aided British, French, and American intervention in northern Russia and Siberia.

The Beginning of Overt Intervention

Newly accessible documents from the British archives show that the imperialists of the United States and France not only supported England's proposals for assistance to Semenov, but also approved Japan's intervention in Siberia and the Far East and sanctioned aid for counterrevolutionaries in the south of Russia, the Ukraine, the north, the area of Murmansk and Archangel, and Bessarabia. One of these documents, drawn up by the Foreign Office for the king and the cabinet, bears the title "President Wilson's Views on Allied Intervention in Russia." Wilson had communicated these views to R. D. Reading, Britain's ambassador in Washington, who said the president agreed that "if Japanese intervention were undertaken, the solest course would be that it should be undertaken with the assent or mandate of the Allies and America."[34]

The president who fostered the raid on Archangel and the invasion of Siberia (as he was later described in a note from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs) was worried that Japan might seize all of Siberia for itself. At the same time, he regarded forestalling a German advance into Russia as too flimsy a pretext for intervention. Nonetheless, this was precisely the pretext the British and American imperialists used.

In the spring of 1918 intensive efforts were launched to realize plans for overt intervention against Soviet Russia. At the end of 1917 and in the first months of the following year, British, American, and Japanese warships started to arrive in Soviet ports in the north and the Far East. The governments involved tried to mask their aggressive intentions by declaring the ships had been sent to save Russia from a German invasion. On January 14, Japanese warships entered Vladivostok without any warning and without the consent of the Soviet government. This unquestionably represented interference in the internal affairs of Soviet Russia.

The general staffs of Britain, France, and the USA having agreed on plans for intervention in the north of Russia, the British cruiser *Glory* brought the first foreign troops—a party of 200—to Murmansk on March 9. The bridgehead at Murmansk, and the one later seized at Archangel, made it possible for the imperialists to strike out at Russia's heartland and its two capitals, Petrograd and Moscow. It was also easier, from these regions, to establish communications with counterrevolutionary forces in Siberia and the north of Russia. The plan for landing British troops at Murmansk was approved in advance by the government of the USA.

To "justify" this move, the Anglo-French command made an oral agreement on March 2 with counterrevolutionaries in the Murmansk Soviet, who were acting on treasonable instructions from Trotsky concerning "joint actions to defend the Murmansk area" from the threat of German invasion. The Soviet government protested vigorously against the landing in Murmansk, but received no answer. Instead Britain sent the cruiser *Cochrane* with another 500 troops. France sent the *Admiral Aube*, and the USA sent the cruiser *Olympia*, which landed more troops. At the inter-Allied conference that opened in London on March 15, Britain, France, and Italy agreed to increase the number of troops involved in the intervention.

Early in April, Britain, the USA, Japan, and France agreed to begin joint intervention in the Far East and Siberia. The Japanese imperialists accordingly landed troops in Vladivostok on April 5, using as a pretext the specially contrived murder of two Japanese merchants. This action was approved by the British agent Lockhart and the American ambassador in Petrograd, David Francis. The British cruiser *Suffolk*, which had arrived in Vladivostok on January 14,

landed troops at the same time. French troops and more British troops were landed subsequently, and finally an American force of 9,000 arrived.

As seen above, the Japanese intervention in Siberia was prepared and agreed on under an Allied mandate. "The imperialists long-planned strike from the East has begun," the Soviet government announced. "The Japanese imperialists want to crush the Soviet revolution, cut Russia off from the Pacific Ocean, seize the rich lands of Siberia, and enslave Siberian workers and peasants." The call went out for Soviet workers and peasants to fight back with all their might.

The Seizure of Archangel

Having seized Murmansk and ignored the energetic protests of the Soviet government, the interventionist forces occupied Kem, Soroka, and Onega. The British and Americans made ready for the seizure of Archangel. In the spring of 1918, members of the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) and Constitutional Democrat (Cadet) parties, together with other counterrevolutionaries, undertook preparations for a coup in Archangel. They were in contact with, and under the guidance of US Ambassador Francis and F. O. Lindley, the British charge d'affaires, both of whom were acting on instructions from their governments.

Generals Knox and Poole, along with other leaders of the British army and navy, argued that a force of not less than 5,000 should be sent to occupy Archangel. Henry-Hughes Wilson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, suggested that a combined Anglo-American brigade, made up of troops intended for the war with Germany in the west, be sent immediately to the north of Russia.

The interventionists and counterrevolutionaries set their plan in motion on August 2, 1918. The actions of those who had inspired the plot and of those who carried it out were well coordinated; the troops landed just six hours after the uprising began.

With the help of British and American bayonets, a "Chief Administration for the Northern District" was established under the "Socialist" Chaikovsky and Miller, a White general. Archival documents bearing on the counterrevolution in the north make it plain that from the very beginning the Chaikovsky-Miller government acted as a puppet of the British and American imperialists, an agent for occupying

forces engaged in ruthless plunder. The real rulers of the Murmansk and Archangel areas were the satraps of British and American imperialism: General Poole, who commanded the Allied forces in the north of Russia, and David Francis, the American ambassador. The army, navy, and police, the courts, economy and finance--all were entirely in the hands of the British and Americans.

Domestic Counterrevolution and Foreign Intervention Joint Forces

The Russian counterrevolutionaries and the British, American, French, Japanese, Italian, and other interventionists joined forces conclusively in the last half of 1918, posing a still greater threat to the existence of the young Soviet republic. Around the middle of the year, Britain, the USA, France and Japan decided to step up their overt, anti-Soviet intervention. The brief respite from war that the Brest-Litovsk Treaty had given Soviet Russia was over. Intervention began in the Caucasus and Central Asia as the British imperialists carried out their predatory intentions.

In the summer of 1918 British aggressors, with the help of the spies General Wilfried Malleson and George Macartney, worked together with the White Guards, the SRs, and the Mensheviks to overthrow the Soviet government in the Transcaspian area and seize Ashkhabad, Merv, Krasnovodsk, and other cities. There was talk of creating a puppet state, a "Turkestan Republic", which would be a sort of bridge uniting the countries of the East with Russia's territories in Central Asia. Particular attention was devoted to seizing Azerbaijan and Baku—the citadel of Soviet power in Transcaucasia and the advanced post of revolution in the East. The British and American imperialists were eager to lay their hands on Baku's rich oil fields.

In December of 1917 the British cabinet decided to send troops to intervene in Baku and Transcaucasia. The Mensheviks, Right SRs, and Dashnaks * served as the henchmen of the Anglo-Americans in the Caucasus. On July 25, 1918, they seized power in the Baku Soviet and formed a counterrevolutionary "government" of SRs and Mensheviks, the "Dictatorship of the Central Caspian Region." With their help British troops under General Dunsterville moved in

* Dashnaks: Members of an Armenian nationalist movement.

from Persia and occupied Baku. They remained there until the middle of September, when pressure from the Turkish army forced them to withdraw. But the British generals dreamed of returning to Baku and seizing the entire Caspian region, which was seen as militarily, politically, and economically important "in connection with the whole British position in the East." [35]

In the Don region, a "volunteer army" under Alekseyev, Kornilov, and Denikin was put together from Russian counterrevolutionary forces. The imperialists of England, the USA, and France gave it their active support and extensive financial assistance. By August of 1918 this army had a strength of 50,000. Counterrevolution in the south received support from the British government in the form of a military mission to Denikin, led by General Milne.

Germany, flouting the terms of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, also attacked Soviet Russia. The Kaiser's troops occupied the Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Crimea, the Baltic coast, and part of Transcaucasia. The German imperialists' seizure of ports on the Black Sea threatened the Black Sea Fleet, which had been moved from Sevastopol to Novorossiisk, the center of the Kuban-Black Sea Republic.

Lenin ordered that the Black Sea Fleet be sunk. On June 18, 1918, the *Kerch* torpedoed the battleship *Free Russia* and nine destroyers, and finally scuttled itself. Its final radio message said: "Attention all—all—all. The torpedo-boat *Kerch* is going down after destroying those vessels of the Black Sea Fleet that preferred death to ignominious surrender to Germany." The sailors went to fight at the front.

Thousands of Soviet Russia's finest working people were shot by the interventionists and their counterrevolutionary henchmen. In Baku, the British nefariously murdered twenty-six commissars. But the shootings, executions, military tribunals, and sentences to hard labour could not break the courage of the Russian people led by the Bolshevik Party.

The Soviet government repeatedly protested to England, France, the USA, and other countries against their completely unjustified invasion. It declared in no uncertain terms that "Soviet forces will do everything in their power to defend Russian territory and to offer resolute resistance to the armed incursion from abroad." Responsibility for the renewed bloodshed was laid entirely on the interventionists, who set off the Civil War.

President Wilson's Concerns

The imperialists engaged in the struggle against the Soviet republic were at the same time involved in serious dispute among themselves. The Allies agreed the Soviet government must be destroyed, but there were significant differences over how the interventionists should divide the territories of Russia. France wanted a Russia ruled by the bourgeoisie and landowners, an ally in future battles with Germany. England, on the contrary, wanted to dismember Russia, to render it weak and incapable of blocking British policy in the Far East, Central Asia, Persia, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

The USA had plans of its own. It did not want to see Japan become stronger in the Far East and the Pacific, where a conflict that had been brewing for decades was coming to a head. President Wilson and the other American politicians and military men who sanctioned Japan's intervention in the Far East and Siberia were hoping to seize for themselves some of the riches to be found there. Wilson initially agreed to Japanese intervention "with the assent or mandate of the Allies and America." Later, after consulting with his political and military advisers, and particularly with the magnates of Wall Street, he changed his views, calling for joint Japanese and American intervention in Siberia and the Far East. In June 1918, Wilson's secretary of state, Charles Hughes—a protege of the oil monopolies, known with good reason as the "oil men's secretary"—put this idea before Britain's War Cabinet, saying a special committee on foreign relations appointed by Wilson had also approved it.[36]

Through R. D. Reading, the British ambassador, Wilson suggested that Viscount Ishii of Japan, Robert Lansing of the USA, and Lord Reading himself meet to discuss joint intervention in Siberia. Wilson's view, which the British government shared, was communicated by Balfour to the Japanese ambassador in London on June 24. Balfour expressed the wish that Japan take no action in Siberia without the agreement of the other co-warring countries. The Japanese ambassador spoke of the need for complete understanding among England, France, Japan, and the United States, of the difficulties involved, and so on. In conclusion he said his government was hoping to see "supreme command of the whole interventional contingents in Siberia . . . placed in the hands of Japan."[37]

The "Ambassadors' Conspiracy" and Lockhart's Role as Provocateur

At the end of November 1917, England, speaking in the person of assistant foreign secretary Lord Robert Cecil, declared that it did not recognize the Soviet government. France adopted a similar position. As seen above, however, the two governments decided at a meeting in Paris in December 1917 to conduct unofficial relations through their agents.

England's representative in Russia was the diplomat-spy R. H. Bruce Lockhart. Lockhart had been Britain's consul-general in Moscow from 1915 to September of 1917. He returned to London six weeks before the October Revolution,[38] but early in January 1918 was sent back to Soviet Russia, this time as an unofficial diplomatic representative, the head of the British mission.

Lockhart traveled to Russia by way of Bergen, where he met aboard a Norwegian vessel with George Buchanan, the former ambassador, to receive his final instructions. He arrived in Petrograd at the end of January. As Lockhart himself later wrote: "The Great Adventure had begun."[39]

Lockhart went to Moscow in March of 1918 when the seat of the Soviet government was moved there. He established close ties with Trotsky, the acting People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. It was Trotsky who issued to Lockhart and his agents, on February 27, 1918, what might be described as a letter of recommendation:

> "Petrograd, 27 February, 1918, No. 567.
> I request all Organizations, Soviets, and Commissars of Railway Stations to give every assistance to the members of the English mission, Messrs. R. B. Lockhart, V. L. Hicks and D. Garstin.
>
> Commissar for Foreign Affairs,
> L. Trotsky."[40]

Using this document, Lockhart's agents traveled all through Siberia, organized the revolt of the Czechoslovak Corps, and made visits to the White Guard generals Kornilov, Alekseyev, and Denikin, and to ataman Semenov.

Lockhart received active assistance from Francis Lindley, the British charge d'affaires in Petrograd. British intelligence also sent a special agent to help Lockhart. This was one Lieutenant Sidney George Reilly—the last name

having been adopted in honour of his father-in-law.*[41] The British naval attache in Petrograd, Captain Cromie, also played an active part; he recruited former officers of the tsarist army and sent them to Murmansk, where preparations were being made for intervention against the young Soviet republic.[42] Lockhart's other helpers included members of the British secret service.

The Soviet government in turn appointed M. M. Litvinov, who was living in England as an emigre, to be its plenipotentiary in London, and informed the Foreign Office accordingly on January 4, 1918. Six days later the Foreign Office replied that since the Soviet government was not recognized by the British government it was prepared to conduct only unofficial relations with Litvinov.

In addition to appointing its plenipotentiary to England, the Soviet government set up a consulate in Glasgow and appointed the teacher John MacLean as its consul. The consulate did much to defend the interests of Russian citizens who had emigrated for political reasons and been interned by the British government, and to support the young Soviet republic. But before the year was out the British government had ordered the consulate of the RSFSR shut down, and MacLean was sentenced to five years in prison.**

The work Lockhart set about after arriving in Petrograd was hardly diplomatic. Together with the ambassadors of the USA and France, he did everything in his power to prevent the conclusion of a peace treaty between Soviet Russia and Germany, promising Moscow arms, money, and instructors for the continuation of the war. When despite these efforts the treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed, the diplomats did their utmost to break it and force Russia to resume fighting on the side of the Allies. In announcing the non-recognition of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, Ambassador Francis of the USA called on Russian counterrevolutionaries to overthrow the Soviet government and continue the war.[43]

In March of 1918, after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk

* It has been suggested that he was born in Odessa with the name of Rosenblum, and came to England at the time of the First World War, but this is scarcely credible.

** The working people of England called insistently for MacLean's release, but he was kept in prison till the end of the war. (See *Velikaya Oktyabrskaya Revolutsiya. Mirovoye osvoboditelnoye dvizheniye*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1958, pp. 103-104.)

Treaty, the ambassadors of the Allied and neutral countries moved from Petrograd to Vologda. This step was officially portrayed as a protest against the treaty, but in fact it was tied to preparations for Anglo-American intervention, which soon began in the north of Soviet Russia. The foreign diplomats wanted to maintain contact through Vologda with the interventionists in the north and in Siberia.

A situation arose that was without precedent in diplomatic history. Britain, the USA, France, and Japan had begun open military intervention against Soviet Russia, but their representatives continued to be present in the country and to enjoy diplomatic immunity. The Soviet government did not want to break off diplomatic relations with the capitalist countries. It repeatedly suggested that the ambassadors return to Moscow, and sent representatives of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to Vologda. But the diplomats, who were busy organizing the forces of domestic counterrevolution and foreign intervention, found Vologda more convenient for their plotting. Nonetheless, they were worried their subversive activities might be unmasked; on July 23, 1918, the Allied ambassadors left Vologda for Archangel, where the guns of their own warships could protect them.

Lockhart, D. Poole (the American consul-general), Major Riggs (head of the American military mission), Grenard (the French consul-general), and General Lavergne (head of the French military mission) remained in Moscow, at the center of a web of conspiracies against the Soviet government. They were in close contact with the White Guard admirals and generals Kolchak, Kaledin, Alekseyev, and Denikin, and with organizations such as the National Center and the League for the Defense of the Homeland and Liberty, which was led by the notorious SR Boris Savinkov.

After the October Revolution, Savinkov had marched on Petrograd with General Krasnov's rebel Cossack corps in an attempt to overthrow the workers' and peasants' government. When the schemes of Kerensky and Krasnov came to nothing, Savinkov fled to the Don region, where generals Alekseyev, Kaledin, and Kornilov were mustering the forces of counterrevolution. At the beginning of 1918, on Alekseyev's orders, he went in secret to Moscow and there founded a counterrevolutionary organization demagog-

ically named the League for the Defense of the Homeland and Liberty. Branches appeared in Kazan, Yaroslavl, Kostroma, Rybinsk, Ryazan, Chelyabinsk, Murom, Vladimir, Arzamas, and other cities. The League had about 10,000 members in all, most of them former officers.

Savinkov blew up bridges and committed acts of terrorism against the leaders of Soviet Russia. Among his accomplices were General Boldyrev, the SR Filonenko, the monarchist General Rychkov, and Colonel Perkhurov. Savinkov was in close contact with Lockhart in Moscow and with Noulens, the French ambassador. In his memoirs, published many years later, Lockhart testified that his assistant, Captain Hicks, served as an intermediary between him and anti-Bolshevik groups such as the National Center and Savinkov's League.

The French diplomats Noulens and Grenard kept in touch with Savinkov and the SRs through two agents, Gautier and Ehrlich, and with the Mensheviks through Charles Dumas, a former socialist deputy. A navy captain named Vertemont ("M. Henri"), who had close ties with Sidney Reilly and worked as an agent for the French mission, was responsible for acts of sabotage against bridges and railways.

Documents that have recently become accessible, and in particular a secret memorandum prepared by Lockhart for the War Cabinet, dated November 7, 1918, prove irrefutably that foreign diplomats were highly active in organizing intervention, conspiracies, and revolts against Soviet Russia.

As soon as Lockhart arrived, he began to strengthen relations with various counterrevolutionary organizations. He wrote that "many of the leaders of these organizations were old personal friends." [44] Confirmation of this can be seen in a secret telegram Lockhart sent to the Foreign Office at 21.00 on May 26, 1918. The information it contained was considered so important that the king and the members of the War Cabinet were informed immediately. "I had to-day," Lockhart wrote, "a long conversation with one of Savinkov's agents. This man, whom I have known for years and who can be trusted,* states that Savinkov's plans for counterrevolution are based entirely on Allied

* Out of considerations of conspiracy Lockhart did not give the name of his agent.

intervention." The telegram went on to report that "the French mission has been supporting them [the counterrevolutionaries—*F. V.*] and has assured them that intervention is already decided. Savinkov proposes to murder all Bolshevik leaders on night of Allies' landing and to form a Government which will be in reality a military dictatorship." The members of the new "government" were to include General Alekseyev, Admiral Kolchak, the former tsarist minister Sazonov, the Cadet leader Kishkin, the SR Avksentiev, and Savinkov himself. [45]

According to Lockhart, the French were pressing Savinkov to move against the Soviet government before the Allies intervened. "He wishes to impress upon Allies absolute necessity for immediate action as he is quite prepared to act and with every day's delay the risk of discovery is greater." [46]

Lockhart's Aid to the National Center

According to Lockhart's own highly revealing account, he was also in contact, through an agent of the intelligence service named Paul Dukes, with the conspirators of the National Center, who actively sought to bring about armed imperialist intervention. In messages sent to London through Paris on July 6 and 16, 1918, and in a report to the Foreign Office dated November 5 of that year, Lockhart described a number of secret conferences and meetings he had with SR and Cadet leaders, with former tsarist ministers, with military men, and with other counterrevolutionaries, all of whom belonged to the National Center, which included and united "all those organizations and parties which are favourable for intervention." [47]

In his secret telegram of July 6, Lockhart describes the National Center as including Cadets and Right SRs. He names the men who represented it at the meeting held that day: Professor Struve, Fyodorov, Avinov, Byelorussov, Shipov, and Astrov. They discussed escalating the Allied intervention. "In my conversation," Lockhart wrote, "following points were made clear and should be carefully borne in mind. In view of all that has been said by Allies regarding intervention, everybody in Russia now believes intervention is about to take place.... Centre has therefore committed itself inevitably and is sending down its leaders to South to Alexeieff and Czechs to Samara. If therefore intervention does not take place and Czechs and Centre are

left to their fate our position in Russia will be irretrievably damaged." Lockhart said the help received from Russian counterrevolutionaries would be "in direct proportion" to the number of troops the Allies sent. [48]

In conclusion, he reported that the Center hoped to create a military dictatorship, probably headed by General Alekseyev. A coalition government made up of several counterrevolutionary parties would be formed. "It would leave all internal questions and especially questions of future form of Government in Russia until end of the war." [49] The leaders of the Center expressed displeasure that the Allies were taking so long to act.

Sometime around July 16, Lockhart called another secret meeting. This time Grenard, the French consul-general, was also present. Struve, Byelorussov, Shipov, and Astrov represented the National Center. The subject was once again the strengthening of intervention and aid to the counterrevolutionary generals Alekseyev and Denikin.

"For the first time since the Revolution," Lockhart reported to London, "really favourable opportunity for intervention has been created and for the first time for many months there seems some hope of coordinated action on the part of various pro-Ally groups in Russia in this movement." [50]

The leaders of the Center asked Lockhart and Grenard for eighty-one million roubles, demanding immediate payment of two million. The British and French representatives each contributed half; Lockhart paid without even consulting London. The Center had earlier received 2.5 million roubles from the French. It apparently gave this to Boris Savinkov, who admitted receiving such an amount from Noulens, the French ambassador, for the organization of the Yaroslavl revolt.

The Rebellion of the Left SRs in Moscow

After the October Revolution, the Left SRs, a petty-bourgeois party with significant influence in rural areas, broke off with the right-leaning majority of their party. They came to an agreement with the Bolsheviks, and in November and December of 1917 Left SR leaders were included in the Soviet government and the collegiums of People's Commissariats.

In December of 1917, the All-Russia Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counterrevolution, Sabotage and Profi-

teering (the Cheka for short) was set up under the Council of People's Commissars. Felix Dzerzhinsky was made head of the Cheka; a number of Left SRs were appointed to responsible posts in it. V. Aleksandrovich was made Dzerzhinsky's assistant; D. Popov commanded a special detachment of the Cheka; and Ya. Blyumkin was made head of the secret department.

Although they were included in the Soviet government, the Left SR leaders maintained secret ties with its counterrevolutionary enemies, among them the Right SRs. They opposed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk and insisted on continuing the war against Germany, a tactic that would have been ruinous for the revolution. When the treaty was signed, and ratified by the Fourth Extraordinary All-Russia Congress of Soviets on March 16, 1918, the Left SRs refused to comply with this decision and resigned from the Council of People's Commissars. They remained, however, in the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and a number of other Soviet governmental bodies, including the Cheka, where they set about organizing counterrevolutionary plots and revolts.

The Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets opened in Moscow, at the Bolshoi Theater, on July 4, 1918. The Left SRs, headed by Maria Spiridonova and Boris Kamkov, called for the abrogation of the Brest-Litovsk treaty and the renewal of hostilities with Germany, refusing to take into account the grave domestic situation of the country, which had been exhausted by the imperialist war. The Congress, however, voted by an overwhelming majority to approve the domestic and foreign policies of the Soviet government. After this defeat the Left SRs resorted to overt provocations and organized a counterrevolutionary revolt against the Soviet government. The assassination of the German ambassador, Count Mirbach, was intended to set off this revolt. On July 6, at about three in the afternoon, "two scoundrels, agents of Russo-Anglo-French imperialism", (as they were described in a government communique) appeared at the German embassy in Moscow. One of them, named Blyumkin, was a member of the Cheka. The other, Andreyev, belonged to the revolutionary tribunal. Having gained admission with false papers, over Dzerzhinsky's forged signature, they killed Mirbach and wounded several of his colleagues.

Mirbach's assassination served as the starting-signal for

a revolt of the Left SRs. Armed detachments seized Moscow's Central Telegraph Office and a portion of the city. The Left SRs' Central Committee fired off telegrams to local authorities claiming that their party had seized power. It later became known that the Central Committee of the Left SRs had earlier declared in a secret resolution adopted on June 24, 1918, that the treaty of Brest-Litovsk must be abrogated, even if this entailed assassinating German diplomats and taking arms against the Soviet government.[51]

Lenin described the revolt as a senseless and criminal act of terrorism, which had "brought Russia to the brink of war."[52] The resolution adopted by the Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets in connection with Mirbach's assassination said: "The murder of the German ambassador was part of a plot aimed at seizing power from the Workers' and Peasants' Soviets by means of an armed revolt and handing it over to an adventurist party that is striving to draw Russia into the war regardless of the cost, in this acting together with the Russian counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie and the Anglo-French imperialists."[53]

The Soviet government took decisive action, and on July 7, at four in the afternoon, it informed the Soviet people in a special communique that the counterrevolutionary revolt of the Left SRs had been crushed. "Left Social Revolutionary revolt has been completely suppressed and most of the leaders captured," Lockhart reported to London on July 10. "Congress [of Soviets—*F. V.*] opened again yesterday afternoon."[54]

The attempt to provoke a war with Germany had failed. The German government demanded permission to send a battalion to Moscow as a guard for its embassy, but Lenin flatly refused, saying this would be an infringement on Soviet Russia's national sovereignty.

The Revolt in Yaroslavl

On the night of July 6, a few hours before the revolt of the Left SRs began in Moscow, an anti-Soviet revolt broke out in Yaroslavl. Its leaders were Boris Savinkov, General Rychkov, who commanded the "armed forces" of the League for the Defense of the Homeland and Liberty, and Colonel Perkhurov, his chief of staff. The revolts of the Left SRs in Moscow and in Yaroslavl were timed to coincide; they were links in a single anti-Soviet scheme.

British, American, and French diplomats turned to plotting against the Soviet government together with generals from the White Guards and leaders of the petty-bourgeois, Cadet and SR parties. With the help of the conspirator-diplomats, the revolt spread to twenty-three cities on the upper Volga, including Yaroslavl, Rybinsk, Kostroma, Murom, Vladimir, Arzamas, and Kaluga, reaching all the way to Vologda.

It was only in Yaroslavl that the conspirators, aided by the former tsarist officers, bourgeois, merchants, clergymen, and others who joined them, were able to gain control. Colonel Perkhurov proclaimed himself "chief commandant" of the province of Yaroslavl and head of the Northern Volunteer Army. A board was created to govern the city.

A merciless White terror began. S. Nakhimson, commissar of the military district, D. Zakgeim, chairman of the city Soviet's executive committee, and hundreds of the Soviet's officials were brutally murdered. More than two hundred other Communists were loaded onto a "death barge," taken out to the middle of the Volga near the Kotorosl River, and left there to die of hunger and exposure. It was only on the thirteenth day that the prisoners managed to break the barge free of its moorings and guide it to a position held by the Red Army. There were only 109 survivors.

There was fierce fighting in Yaroslavl until July 21. The city, and especially the area between the kremlin and the Vspolye station, was almost completely demolished. The White Guards were surrounded by Red Army units and armed workers. In a last desperate farce, the remnants of Perkhurov's staff declared war on Germany and then surrendered to German prisoners of war being held in Yaroslavl until they could be repatriated under the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The Soviet command disarmed the Germans and captured the leaders of the revolt, who had hidden themselves in the municipal theater.

The Yaroslavl revolt was at an end. Some of its leaders were shot, others sentenced to prison. Savinkov and Perkhurov, however, managed to escape retribution and continued their fight against Soviet Russia. The League for the Defense of the Homeland and Liberty, the hope of Noulens, Lockhart, and the Russian counterrevolutionaries in 1918, had ceased to exist. But the foreign diplomats and their agents were not about to give up their anti-Soviet scheming.

Lockhart's Conspiracy

The failure of the revolts by the Left SRs in Moscow and by Savinkov and Perkhurov in Yaroslavl compelled foreign diplomats to change their tactics. Their new designs encompassed overthrowing the Soviet government, proclaiming a military dictatorship in Moscow, and murdering Lenin, Sverdlov, and other Soviet leaders. Once this was accomplished, the conspirators meant to publish false documents purporting to be secret correspondence and treaties between the Soviet and German governments, with the aim of provoking a war between the two countries.

As the Cheka established, the heads of this new conspiracy were Lockhart in Moscow, French Consul-General Grenard, General Lavergne, Captain Cromie (the British naval attache in Petrograd), and Sidney Reilly. American Consul-General Poole in Moscow, US Ambassador Francis, Noulens, other so-called diplomats, and various military men were involved as well. Following is an account of how the "ambassadors' conspiracy" took shape and how the Cheka succeeded in exposing it.

In the summer of 1918, two Latvian commanders appeared at the Latvian club in Petrograd. One called himself Shmedchen; his real name was Janis Buikis, and he was a member of the Cheka. The other was Janis Sprogis. Both had been sent to Petrograd by Dzerzhinsky. They gained the confidence of club members who belonged to a counter-revolutionary group in contact with Captain Cromie and Sidney Reilly. The Latvians introduced the two men to Cromie, hoping that Shmedchen could be brought into the "ambassadors' conspiracy." Cromie gave Shmedchen a letter of recommendation to Lockhart, who was to direct him in subversive activities among Latvian infantry units. Shmedchen departed for Moscow.

The Cheka decided to include the commander of the 1st Latvian Infantry Division, Eduard Berzin, in its effort to infiltrate the group of spying diplomats. Berzin was to play the role of a nationalist commander fighting for the "liberation" of Latvia.

Lockhart's first meeting with Shmedchen and Berzin took place on August 14, at Lockhart's apartment at No. 19 Khle-

bny pereulok, in the Arbat region of Moscow.* Here is what Lockhart wrote in a secret memorandum to the Foreign Office dated November 5, 1918. He had been at the American consulate-general for another round of talks. "On arriving at my flat I found Captain Hicks and a young Lettish officer from Petrograd named Smidchen or Snedchen. He had a note of recommendation from Captain Cromie. He stated that Berzin, one of the Lettish commanders, was waiting outside and would like to talk to me about Lettish matters, if I would see him. I accordingly asked him to come in. Berzin made a favourable impression." [55] Lockhart, being an experienced agent, carefully checked the handwriting of Cromie's letter. Once satisfied that it was genuine, he began a circumspect conversation. Berzin did most of the talking.

"He stated," Lockhart wrote, "that while Letts were willing to fight against 'White Guards' they had no wish to fight against their former Allies. They were afraid, however, that the Allies intended to renew the Monarchy in Russia." Berzin went on to say that "the war must be finished either by Allied victory or by a world revolution and he had lost faith in the rapid possibility of world revolution." [56] At first Lockhart was very restrained, answering that before he made any statement on the Latvian question he would have to consult with the other Allied representatives. He proposed another meeting, at the same time on the following day.

That evening Lockhart told the American and French consuls about his meeting with Berzin. It was decided that the meetings should continue, and that both Latvians should be introduced to Sidney Reilly, who could keep an eye on them and help them realize their intentions.

Lockhart's second meeting with Berzin took place the next day. Grenard and Lieutenant Reilly, who had connections with General Poole, were also invited. [57] This time Lockhart was more open. He approved Berzin's intention of breaking with the Bolsheviks, said the Allies would support the creation of the separate Latvian armed forces, and promised aid in restoring Latvia's independence. There was discussion of the possibility that a revolt against the Soviet

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* in his report to the Foreign Office Lockhart said it was August 15 or thereabouts, claiming he did not remember the exact date. (See *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR*, Vol. I, pp. 724-725.)

government might be organized in Moscow soon, in connection with the British advance from Murmansk.

Berzin and Shmedchen were provided with documents, signed by Lockhart, giving them safe-passage through the British lines to General Poole in Archangel. Sidney Reilly acted as the middleman for later contacts.[58] It was through him that Berzin received money for the organization of an anti-Soviet revolt.

Reilly's first meeting with Shmedchen took place August 17, on Tsvetnoi Boulevard. At this meeting, according to the *Press Bulletin of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee*, they discussed the possibility of stationing in Vologda armed forces that would turn the city over to the English by treachery. A coup, it was said, might take place in Moscow in two or three weeks, i.e., between the tenth and the twentieth of September.[59]

The Kremlin was guarded by Latvian riflemen, and Reilly proposed that they should arrest the members of the Soviet government. There was to be a plenary session of the Council of People's Commissars; Lenin would certainly be present. As soon as the government leaders were arrested, Lenin was to be sent to Archangel, which was held by the interventionists. Later, fearing that along the way Lenin might win over the troops in his escort, Reilly changed his mind. Once the head of the Soviet government had been eliminated, the rebel forces would occupy the State Bank, the central telephone and telegraph offices, and other points of strategic importance. The military dictatorship installed by the coup would institute the death penalty.

At their first meeting, Reilly gave Berzin 700,000 roubles to finance the revolt. Of this sum, according to Lockhart, the Americans had contributed 200,000 roubles and the French 500,000. The British also passed 700,000 roubles through Reilly, making 140,000 in all. At another meeting, on August 28, Reilly gave Berzin 300,000 roubles more. It was also decided that the two men would go to Petrograd to make contact with the British military mission and the White Guards aiding it.

Reilly met with Cromie and Webster in Petrograd the following day. They discussed contacts with counterrevolutionaries in Nizhny Novgorod and Tambov. The secret schemes of the counterrevolutionaries and the ambassadors were taking on new scope and boldness.

Lockhart was not the only Allied diplomatic representative holding secret meetings aimed at setting off a revolt. The French journalist Rene Marchand was present at one such meeting at the consulate-general of the United States in Moscow. Poole, Grenard, Lockhart, Reilly, and Vertemont ("M. Henri") were in attendance. Marchand wrote to French President Raymond Poincaré that he learned there of plans to cause starvation in Petrograd by destroying bridges on the main road between that city and Moscow. He heard a French agent say "he had already attempted to blow up the bridge of Tcherepovetz, which as far as the provisioning of Petrograd is concerned," Marchand pointed out, "would have the same effect as the destruction of the bridge of Zvanka." [60]

Lockhart reported to the Foreign Office that British, French, and American agents were planning ways of "destroying bridges and railways and taking Petrograd and Moscow by hunger." British and French officers were engaged in this work; the French were in close contact with Savinkov's organization. Lockhart describes his activities at the center of counterrevolutionary activity: "Orders were constantly received from General Poole or his staff to send up counterrevolutionaries to the North or to finance various people. We had also to maintain relations with the anti-Bolshevik forces on the other side of the Volga [i.e., the Czechoslovak corps—*F. V.*]. . . with General Alexeieff." [61]

As seen above, Lockhart, Reilly, and other diplomats went beyond conspiring to arrest members of the government. They laid plans to assassinate the revolution's leaders.

In Petrograd, on January 1, 1918, an attempt was made on Lenin's life as he was returning by car from a meeting with Fritz Platten, the secretary of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party. Lenin was unhurt. Platten, who had shielded him with his own body, was slightly wounded in the hand. The would-be assassin was never caught, but the trail led towards the counterrevolutionary camp.

On June 20, V. Volodarsky, a member of the Petrograd Soviet Presidium and Commissar for Press, Propaganda, and Agitation, was killed in Petrograd. On the morning of August 30, Mikhail Uritsky, People's Commissar for Internal Affairs and Chairman of the Cheka for the Petrograd commune, was assassinated in Petrograd by the "socialist" Leonid Kanegisser.

On the evening of August 30, 1918, Lenin spoke at the former Mikhelson factory (which now bears Lenin's own name) in the Zamoskvorechie district. As he was leaving afterwards he was shot, suffering grave wounds from two poisoned bullets. This time the terrorist was apprehended. Her name, as established later, was Fanny Kaplan; she had acted in accordance with a directive from the Central Committee of the Right SRs.

The attempt on Lenin's life shook the entire country, rousing the utmost indignation among its people. Numerous meetings of farm, factory, and office workers demanded that no mercy be shown in dealing with the enemies of the revolution. On September 2, 1918, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee adopted a resolution that said: "To the White terror of the enemies of the workers' and peasants' government, the workers and peasants will reply with mass 'Red terror' against the bourgeoisie and its agents." [62]

After its investigation of the attempt on Lenin's life and the assassination of Uritsky, the Cheka handed down the decision that Kaplan and Kanegisser were to be shot. The sentence was carried out on September 3, 1918.

These acts against the lives of prominent government figures forced the Cheka to take energetic measures against the diplomats who were plotting and organizing revolts. Although the "ambassadors' conspiracy" had not assumed final shape, and the preliminary investigation was not yet completed, the Cheka decided to make arrests without delay. Dzerzhinsky hurried off to Petrograd; the operation in Moscow was left in the hands of his assistant, Janis Peters.

The Conspirator-Diplomats

On August 31, 1918, a search was conducted at the British embassy in Petrograd. In Moscow, searches were made at the British and French consulates, and also in Lockhart's apartment, which had been used for clandestine meetings. Lockhart and his accomplice, Captain Hicks, were taken to the headquarters of the Cheka.

The Press Bulletin of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee for September 2 stated:

> "The picture that emerges from all the data now in the hands of the Soviet government makes it quite clear that a conspiracy aimed at organizing a revolt

in Moscow and seizing the Council of People's Commissars existed among the diplomatic and military representatives of foreign powers. The conspirators used every means at their disposal. They set up a secret network throughout Russia, circulated false documents, and spent enormous sums to suborn agents of the Soviet government.... The conspirators had planned in detail how they would reorganize the government after their coup d'etat. A dictatorial triumvirate was to be set up, special committees created in military units, and so on." [63]

On September 6, 1918, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Chicherin made a statement on the involvement of British and French diplomats in plots against the Soviet government. It said the Soviet government and the Cheka had information proving that Lockhart and his agents were at the center of the conspiracy. [64]

Nonetheless, Lockhart tried to deny he was involved in a conspiracy or had contacts with counterrevolutionaries. When Peters asked if he knew Shmedchen, Berzin, and others, he refused to answer, claiming diplomatic immunity. [65]

Lockhart was released on orders from Sverdlov and Chicherin, but taken into custody again after Litvinov was arrested in London on September 4. [66] Despite vigorous action to detain foreign spies and agents (some forty persons were arrested in all), Sidney Reilly, Henri Vertemont, and an agent of Poole's named Kalamantiano managed to escape. Captain Hicks, General Lavergne, and Grenard, the French consul-general, took refuge first in the consulate-general of the USA in Moscow, later taken over by the Norwegian mission. [67]

"A Guest of His Majesty's Government"

The exposure of this far-flung conspiracy among the ambassadors of Britain, France, and the USA, together with the arrest of Lockhart and other foreign agents, evoked from Western governments and diplomats, and in the bourgeois press, loud and sustained protests against the "Red terror." On September 6, Balfour sent Chicherin a telegram demanding an immediate apology for the search of

the British embassy in Petrograd and the arrest of Lockhart, and strict punishment for all persons responsible. The British even went so far as to threaten members of the Soviet government, saying they would be held personally responsible.

"The government of the RSFSR," Chicherin answered the next day, "is faced with the necessity of making it impossible for persons proved guilty of conspiracy to continue their activities, which are contrary to international law." He said the Soviet government was prepared to release all the British and French representatives who had been arrested, provided that Russian citizens in England and France, and in areas occupied by Allied troops, were not harmed or persecuted.

The British government's response to the arrest of Lockhart was to arrest M. M. Litvinov, the Soviet representative in London, as well as a number of other Russian citizens. "I was arrested and taken to Brixton prison," Litvinov recalled. "On the door of my cell, the British hypocrites hung a sign: 'Guest of His Majesty's Government.' "[68]

Litvinov demanded that he and other Soviet citizens being held illegally in England be released at once and allowed to return home. A ranking official of the Foreign Office, Rex Leeper, came to visit. He suggested that Litvinov, from his cell, send Chicherin a telegram saying the British government was prepared to release him immediately and send him to Bergen, together with his staff and other Russians residing in England whom he might name.[69] But first, Lockhart must be released. As soon as he reached Stockholm, Litvinov could leave for Bergen. But Litvinov refused to conduct negotiations while he was being held prisoner.

On September 13, there was an emergency session of the War Cabinet. Leeper reported that as soon as the government allowed Litvinov to leave the country British subjects in Russia would also be released. Curzon said he was very reluctant to release Litvinov, but in any case he should be allowed to sail only when the British citizens had crossed the Finnish frontier.[70]

The cabinet decided that Leeper should continue his talks with Litvinov, and that when the latter was released from prison he should telegram Chicherin asking him to guarantee the safety of all British subjects, both officials and others, and of all British army and naval officers in Russia, who were to be released at once and allowed to proceed

to ports of departure. When the news came that the British had left Russia, Litvinov would be allowed to go. Not before.

The details of the exchange were worked out during September in correspondence between Balfour and Chicherin. Lockhart and Grenard were allowed to leave; Litvinov and his colleagues were released and returned to Soviet Russia. A telegram was received saying that Litvinov and the others had arrived in Bergen, and thereupon Lockhart crossed the border into Finland.[71]

Early in November, Lockhart sent the Foreign Office a detailed memorandum on Soviet Russia's internal and external affairs. He named the counterrevolutionary forces that could be used against the government and called for broader Allied intervention.

The Trial of the Lockhart Case

The case of Lockhart and his accomplices was tried in a Soviet court in late November and early December of 1918. Twenty-four persons were charged before the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal. Four of them were tried *in absentia*: Lockhart, Grenard, Sidney Reilly, and Henri Vertemont. The first two had been allowed by the Soviet government to return to their respective countries; Reilly and Vertemont had managed to escape.

Bruce Lockhart, formerly head of the British diplomatic mission in Moscow, and Grenard, the French consul-general, were accused of violating international law by using their diplomatic immunity in an attempt to create a counterrevolutionary organization and wreak havoc with the Russian economy. Having aroused discontent among the people, they meant to overthrow the Soviet government with the help of suborned Latvian riflemen from the Kremlin guard.

Lieutenant Reilly and Henri Vertemont, and with them an American citizen named Kalamatiano (who had been using the falsified passport of a certain Serpovsky), were accused of direct involvement in carrying out the conspiratorial plans of Lockhart and Grenard. Reilly had attempted to bribe the Latvian riflemen who were to accomplish the coup d'etat.

The court found that diplomatic agents of Britain, France, and the USA, abetted by representatives of Russian

counterrevolutionary forces (former Lieutenant-Colonel Frid, former Major-General Zagryazhsky, the former officer Potemkin, former Lieutenant-Colonel of the General Staff Golitsyn, the former Moscow customs official Solyus, and others), had attempted to obtain secret political and military information, disorganize Red Army units, blow up railway bridges, and, lastly, "overthrow the workers' and peasants' government and assassinate the leaders of the labouring masses, dealing a death blow to socialist revolution not only in Russia but throughout the world." [72]

In a secret memorandum to the Foreign Office dated November 5, 1918, Lockhart did his best to belittle his role in the anti-Soviet plot among the diplomats and play the wide-eyed innocent. Even so, he could not ignore the admission of Captain George Hill, Reilly's senior assistant in Moscow, that "the Bolshevik accusations were substantially true and . . . a coup d'etat had been planned." [73]

The verdict of the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal, handed down on December 3, pointed out that the real culprit was international imperialism. "The burden of criminal responsibility for the attempted counterrevolutionary coup d'etat and the cynical violation of elementary norms of international law it entailed," the verdict said, "rests primarily on the capitalist governments of whose evil intentions [the accused—*F. V.*] are the technical agents." [74] Lockhart, Reilly, and Vertemont were declared enemies of the working people, standing outside the laws of the RSFSR and subject to be shot as soon as apprehended on Russian territory. [75]

After returning to England, Lockhart continued to work for the Foreign Office as a political intelligence agent. He spent several years in Czechoslovakia as a "commercial" secretary at the British mission in Prague. Afterwards he worked for several years on the *Evening Standard*, a Conservative newspaper.

Between 1939 and 1940, he was once again employed as a political intelligence agent by the Foreign Office. In the first years of World War II he was Britain's representative to the provisional Czechoslovak government in London and a deputy to the assistant foreign secretary. In 1942, Churchill, mindful of Lockhart's wide experience as a diplomat-spy, made him director general of the department for political warfare, where he coordinated all of Britain's propaganda during the war years.

In the intervals of his work at the Foreign Office and on Fleet Street, Lockhart wrote a whole series of books. One of the first was *Memoirs of a British Agent* (1932), which describes his stay in Soviet Russia and his counterrevolutionary activities there. His other works included *Retreat from Glory* (1934), *Return to Malaya* (1936), *Guns or Butter* (1938), *Jan Masaryk. A Personal Memoir* (1951), *My Europe* (1952), *Your England* (1955), and *The Two Revolutions. An Eye-Witness Study of Russia* (1957). He lived out his last years in the little Scottish village of Tomintoul, where he continued work on his memoirs. He died at the age of eighty-six.

The fate of Sidney Reilly was quite different. When the Lockhart conspiracy was broken up he fled to England. Churchill appointed him, as a specialist in the "Russian question," to serve as a political officer at the headquarters of Denikin's army. Later he was assigned to the White Guards in the Crimea and Odessa. In March of 1919, he was summoned posthaste to London, where he reported to British political leaders on the state of the Russian counterrevolutionary forces, and in particular of Denikin's army in the south. He made a similar report to the heads of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference.

In 1919 and 1920, Reilly was employed by British intelligence in maintaining contacts with the leaders of various White emigrant groups. In 1920 he was in close communication with Boris Savinkov, with whom he met in Warsaw. Savinkov was organizing raids on Soviet Byelorussia by armed bands operating from Polish territory. Reilly himself took part in these raids. Later he was ordered to return to London, where he maintained ties with Savinkov and wrote anti-Soviet articles for the newspapers.

As a "specialist" in Russian affairs Reilly consulted British intelligence chiefs, politicians, and military men, and even people in high places in the USA. But he was restlessly nostalgic for his old haunts. In the autumn of 1925 he crossed the Finnish border illegally to make contact with a counterrevolutionary organization, little suspecting that the Unified State Political Directorate (OGPU) was watching his every move. Reilly had fallen into a trap. He "safely" made his way to Petrograd, and then to Moscow, where he was arrested. After a brief interrogation, the sentence passed on him back in 1918 by the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal was carried out.

After the discovery of the "ambassadors' conspiracy," the Soviet government demanded the withdrawal from its territory of Allied and American diplomats engaged in trying to overthrow the Soviet government, escalate the military intervention, and set off a civil war.

The imperialist powers broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet republic. Neutral countries, following in the political wake of Britain and the USA, did likewise; these included Switzerland, Spain, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. By the end of 1918, the diplomatic isolation of the young republic was complete.

Chapter 2

Who Organized the Revolt of the Czechoslovak Corps?

Early in May of 1918, in one of the cosy rooms of the prime minister's residence at 10 Downing Street, a special cabinet committee held a secret meeting. Presiding was General Jan Smuts, one of Lloyd George's most trusted advisers. Also present was Lord Alfred Milner, the British high commissioner in Southern Africa who had brought the Boer leaders—including Jan Smuts—to their knees. But now the two men were allies, not enemies. Milner had crushed out freedom in Africa, and now he and Smuts were laying plans to do away with it in Russia. Two other members of the War Cabinet were also on hand: the First Sea Lord and Henry-Hughes Wilson, who was then head of the Imperial General Staff.

The main question discussed in this narrow circle was how Britain and other powers could escalate their intervention against Soviet Russia. Then as now, however, the British bourgeoisie preferred not to pull chestnuts from the fire with its own hands. Better that the soldiers of other countries should fight and die. The Smuts committee, accordingly, was considering how to raise the Czechoslovak Corps in revolt against the new and still unsteady Soviet government.

Newly accessible documents from the British War Cabinet answer once and for all the questions of who organized the Czechoslovak Corps' revolt, what aid Britain and the USA provided, and what role was played by Tomas Masaryk and Eduard Benes, the leaders of the Czechoslovak nationalist movement.

During the First World War part of the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie, led by Masaryk and Benes, sided with Entente against the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. They hoped that in return they would receive support in creating their own

state. The Allies helped the Czechs set up a National Council in Russia, France, England, and the USA. Masaryk was its president, Benes its secretary general. The National Council formed a legion of Czech and Slovak prisoners of war to fight on the side of the Allies against Germany and the other Triple Alliance powers.

The Czechoslovak Legions and Their Growth

The first Czech legions came into being at the beginning of the war, when Austria-Hungary allied itself to Germany. A small "Czech militia" was formed in Russia under the protection of the Czech bourgeoisie. As the imperialist war dragged on, hundreds and then thousands of Czechs and Slovaks, unwilling to shed the blood of their Russian brothers, voluntarily surrendered on the Eastern Front. Others were captured by force. By July of 1917, there were 360,000 Czechoslovak prisoners of war in Russia,[1] most of them in the Ukraine, in the environs of Kiev and Poltava.

Military units made up of Czech and Slovak prisoners of war began to be formed in Russia—under the tsarist, and then the provisional government—and also in France. Tomas Masaryk was sent to Russia as a paid British agent to recruit for them.[2] In 1917, the French government extended a credit of 2,100,000 francs to Masaryk, Benes, and M. R. Stefanik for expenses connected with recruiting Czech prisoners of war in Russia.[3] In the summer of that year, the British War Office "suggested" he go to Russia.[4] He and Benes deceived the Czech legionaires, concealing from them the criminal and imperialist character of the war.

Masaryk declared that peace with the Germans was impossible; the war against them was a fight to the death.[5] But the British and French capitalists for whom Benes and Masaryk were working had decided to use the Czechoslovak soldiers not against the Kaiser but against the Russian revolution, which they claimed was in league with Austro-German imperialism. The authors of this slander told the Czechs that in fighting against the Russian Revolution they would aid the liberation of their own country, even though the revolution in Russia had become a "victim of imperialism" and had never supported the aggression of Austria and Germany.

As the All-Russia Central Executive Committee pointed out in an appeal to the Czechoslovak army: "If Russian counterrevolutionaries, French, British, and American bankers, and Czech capitalists are trying to keep you among the bands fighting against the Red Army, they do so as enemies of the Russian people, of the Czech people, and of the working class and the poor in all countries." [6]

Lies, deceit, forgery—Masaryk and Benes stopped at nothing. They succeeded in duping the Czechoslovak legionaires, brought them under the sway of counterrevolution, and later threw them into bloody battles for the interests of Anglo-French and Russian capital.

By October of 1917, the units formed of Czech and Slovak prisoners of war had been united into a single corps numbering in the tens of thousands.

The Deceived Czechs and Slovaks

Benes and Masaryk, and their masters in the City, on Wall Street, and the Comité des Forges, hated the October Revolution and wanted to use Czech and Slovak soldiers to stifle the young Soviet republic. The legionaires, who had enlisted in the hope of helping to liberate their country, were tricked into fighting against the revolution that had brought them true freedom and national independence. Organizing the revolt of the Czechoslovak legions in Russia was the first step in the policy that pushed the Czechoslovak government into the camp of European counterrevolution.

Newly accessible documents from British archives show that the revolt of the Czechoslovak corps was organized by the governments of England, France, and the USA, using Benes and Masaryk as their agents. [7]

In November of 1917, the Allied governments held a secret meeting in Jassy (Romania). A Czech representative and representatives of the Romanian and Russian military commands were also present. They discussed plans to use the Czechoslovak corps as a strike force against the Soviet government. It was in accordance with these plans that Masaryk, on February 8, 1918, proclaimed the Czechoslovak legions to be part of the French army. [8] Clemenceau declared that the legions, by order of the Allied Supreme Council, were to be transferred to France, where they would fight against Germany on the Western Front.

In January 1918, the Soviet and French governments held negotiations on the return of Russian soldiers from France. One of the conditions the French insisted on was the evacuation of Czechoslovak forces. It was proposed that this be done through Murmansk. [9]

A different plan for using the Czechoslovak troops was put forward at a meeting of British and French generals held in the French general staff early in February 1918. The Czechoslovak National Council had authorized General Berthelot of France to employ the troops as he thought best. His first idea was to advance the Czechoslovak legions on the left wing of the Romanian army, thereby relieving part of the 6th Russian Army in the fight against the Germans. [10] This was not done because of objections from General Niessel, the French military attache in Russia, and from the government of the counterrevolutionary Ukrainian Rada, which wanted to use these disciplined forces, which were not disorganized by "Maximalists" [i.e., Bolsheviks—*F. V.*], for its own ends—namely to combat the revolution. [11] But the original plans for using the Czechoslovak corps on the Western or Romanian front were not put into effect. The Entente and US imperialists needed them elsewhere, and for other purposes.

The young Soviet republic was achieving successes in the international arena. It was also exerting a strong revolutionary influence on the working people of Britain, France, the USA, Japan, and other countries. With Germany's defeat clearly visible, this posed a threat to the existence of the capitalist order and forced Lloyd George, Churchill, Clemenceau, and Wilson, with their servants Masaryk and Benes, to change their minds. They decided to use the Czechoslovak legions in Russia, against the Soviet government.

On October 19, 1918, a note from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs was delivered to a British envoy in Norway. "The treacherous revolt by the Czechoslovaks," it said, "with all of its unfortunate consequences—unfortunate first and foremost for the Czechoslovaks themselves—has from the very outset been mainly the result of the Entente's influence and of the money it has provided so lavishly. It was the handiwork of agents of the Entente, who deceived the Czechoslovaks and drew them into this fatal adventure." [12]

The political leaders of England, France, and the USA, and likewise Russian reactionaries, were using the Czecho-

slovaks as a tool in their counterrevolutionary machinations. "French and British officers," the note continued, "have constantly played the leading role in the Czechoslovak movement in Siberia. And Masaryk, the most prominent leader of the Czech National Council, has been in close and uninterrupted contact with France and England." [13]

Britain and France next proposed that the Czech legions be brought to France not through Murmansk and Archangel, but by way of Siberia. They meant to disperse the Czechoslovak Corps and other forces along the Trans-Siberian railroad; at an opportune moment an anti-Soviet rebellion would be raised in the Volga region, in Siberia, and in the Far East. This is why, in February of 1918, the Allies cancelled their original agreement with the Soviet government and raised the question of evacuating the Czechoslovaks through Vladivostok. [14]

In late March, the Soviet government and the Russian branch of the National Council agreed on the conditions under which the legions would be allowed to travel from the Ukraine to Vladivostok. [15] The Council of People's Commissars insisted that the Czechoslovaks go as private citizens, not as armed forces. They were to surrender all weapons except those needed to post guards.

The Soviet government scrupulously carried out its side of the agreement. The same cannot be said of Masaryk and Benes. Most of the legion's weapons were not surrendered, but concealed under the floors and in the walls of the cars. From eight to ten troop trains were intentionally concentrated at major stations and cities along the route from the Volga to the Pacific. Russian White Guards joined the corps along the way, swelling their numbers from an initial 37,451 infantrymen and 451 cavalrymen [16] to a some fifty or sixty thousand. The command of the Czechoslovak corps waited only for the signal to begin.

The British Government's Decision

Let us take a closer look at the decisions made by the British cabinet committee at its secret meeting on May 11, 1918. Smuts's note on the meeting said: "The War Cabinet this morning appointed Lord Milner and myself together with the First Sea Lord and the CIGS [Chief of the Imperial General Staff—*F. V.*] as a committee to consider the

question of the steps which could immediately be taken to organize military resistance to the enemy in Russia [i.e., the Soviet government—*F.V.*], while the correspondence with America and Japan in reference to intervention was proceeding. We met this afternoon and arrived to the following conclusions."

The note continued: "It seems ... anomalous that while great efforts were being made to secure the intervention of Japan in Russia, the Czecho-Slovak troops should be removed from that country to the Western front." [17]

Smuts thought the Czechoslovaks could better be employed against the Soviet republic than against Germany. Citing the opinion of experts, he argued that moving them would mean taking transport away from an equivalent number of American troops. It would not do to ask the Japanese for ships while pressure was being applied to get them to intervene in Russia, which would tie up their entire navy. But the real concern was not, of course, a lack of transport. No one intended to take the Czechs to France. Indeed, when a portion of them arrived in Vladivostok, on April 4 and May 31, 1918, there were no ships there to pick them up. [18]

"We therefore came to the conclusion," Smuts continued, "that the Czecho-Slovak troops now at Vladivostok or on their way to it should be taken charge of there and be organised into *efficient units* by the French Government.... They might be used to stiffen the Japanese as part of Allied force of intervention in Russia." *[19] As for the rest of the Czechoslovak forces in Russia, Smuts proposed that they be concentrated in Murmansk or Archangel. Until they sailed they could be used by British generals in the north "to hold those places and to take part in any Allied intervention in Russia." General Poole was to be sent with a staff of officers to help organize the Czechoslovaks and the other interventionist forces in Archangel and Murmansk. [20] The British had seized Murmansk in March of 1918. The documentary record shows that British and American politicians and military men were also preparing to seize Archangel.

A Japanese force landed in Vladivostok early in April. This, and the actions of Semenov's bands, made it impossible to send the corps on towards Vladivostok according to the agreement with the National Council. The Soviet gov-

* Italics added by the author.

ernment was forced to change the route; it suggested that the corps be evacuated through Archangel.[21] The counter-revolutionary Czechoslovak commanders Gajda, Voyciechovsky, and Cecek took advantage of this to carry out the plan for intervention.

On May 14, just three days after the cabinet meeting described above, the National Council held a meeting in Chelyabinsk to work out the details of the armed revolt. British and French representatives were present.[22] The final plan was approved at a meeting in Chelyabinsk on May 23.[23]

The Czechoslovak revolt was part of a broader design for actions against the Soviet government. It was closely connected with Allied and American intervention in the north of Russia and Japanese aggression in the Far East.

The Soviet government was aware of preparations for the revolt, and of the Czechoslovak commanders' ties with the British and French.[24] It ordered the local authorities to disarm the Czechoslovaks. This was not accomplished, however, largely because of Trotsky's treacherous interference.[25] Lloyd George himself said Trotsky wanted Allied intervention in Russia.[26] True, he admitted it would be difficult, if not impossible, for Trotsky to get his wish. The prime minister understood that the Russian people would fight the British, French, American, Japanese, and other interventionists with all their might. Nonetheless, Trotsky's actions did much harm.

The Rebellion of the Czechoslovaks

The Czech legionaires began their rebellion on May 25, 1918. They seized the city of Chelyabinsk, ousted the local authorities, and placed them under arrest. When Red Army units demanded that they desist and lay down their arms, they opened fire.[27] The trains carrying them towards Vladivostok halted and turned, instead, to the west, towards Moscow. The Czechoslovak corps proceeded to take Penza on May 29, Tomsk on May 31, Omsk on June 7, Samara on June 8, Ufa on July 5, Simbirsk on July 21, and Kazan on August 6.

Some 94,000 prisoners of war—Germans, Hungarians, and Turks—were serving as auxiliaries under the Czech military leaders, who also formed units of White Guards, for-

mer officers, and Cossacks. These numbered another 60,000. In all, more than 200,000 men were involved in the rebellion. The British and French interventionists were hoping it would set off kulak uprisings in the Volga region, Siberia and the Far East.

Wherever the rebels gained the upper hand, they abolished Soviet power and restored bourgeois institutions. "The development of events has shown," the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs pointed out in a note sent to the British agent Lockhart and the French, American, and Italian consuls in Moscow on June 12, 1918, "that we are faced here with a rebellion against the Soviet republic by White Guards, reactionary officers, and other counterrevolutionary elements, supported by the Czechoslovak units and relying on their armed strength." [28]

Masaryk and Benes suggested that the Allied leaders send in additional Czech units from the British, French, and American armies. [29] While the rebellion raged in Siberia and on the Volga, its leaders united and coordinated their efforts with those of the British, French, American, and Japanese interventionists and the Russian counterrevolutionary forces. The very existence of the Soviet republic was in danger.

Butchers of the Russian People

The leaders of the rebel legions acting on behalf of international capital, and in particular the notorious Colonel R. Gajda, committed bloody crimes and atrocities against the Russian people. Prisons filled to bursting with the flower of the working class, "the corpses of young workers heaped up like mountains by the vile agents of reaction, rivers of blood in the streets of cities and villages" [30-31]—and still the list of these butchers' outrages against the Russian people is far from complete.

A note from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs records that even in the small towns and villages of the Urals, Samara, and Kazan regions, and of other areas occupied by the Czechoslovaks, "the shootings each day are numbered in the hundreds; on several occasions whole crowds of workers and peasants, including women and children, have been massacred with machine guns." [32] Colonel Gajda and other officers who were glorified in the Bri-

tish press for their brutal crimes ordered that every Communist worker or peasant and every armed Red Army soldier be summarily executed.[33] In Chelyabinsk the entire local Soviet was shot.

When the Czechoslovaks seized Samara, 12,000 people were rounded up. Everyone who had anything to do with the Soviet government was shot. Thirty-seven women, the wives of Bolsheviks, were arrested. Half were shot, the rest hanged.[34] The rebel soldiers and officers committed other acts of violence, robbery, and brigandage, including the looting of dead bodies.[35] Throughout the territories occupied by the Czechoslovaks and White Guards, hundreds of thousands of voices cried out against the imperialist authors of these enormities and against their hired butchers.

The Czech Internationalists

Many of the Czech and Slovak prisoners of war could not be deceived, however. They refused to turn their guns against the Russian workers and peasants. "It is not the Czechoslovaks," Lenin said, "but their counterrevolutionary officers who are hostile to the Soviet government."[36] Units made up of Czech and Slovak internationalists, numbering some 12,000 men, fought alongside the Red Army against the interventionists and the Russian counterrevolutionary forces.[37] In May of 1918 they held a constituent assembly, which expressed its solidarity with the Soviet people. The attitude of those who wanted true freedom for Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia is expressed in a letter written by a group of Czechoslovaks: "We will fight together with our Soviet brothers to defend the power of the Soviets."[38,39] There were numerous Communists among the Czechoslovaks. They published newspapers, pamphlets, and other literature revealing the truth about the Allied interventionists. Jaroslav Hasek, one of Czechoslovakia's greatest writers, joined the Communist Party and worked in the political department of the 5th Red Army.

Thousands of Czechoslovak legionaries refused to fight against their Russian brothers. They were disarmed and sent to prison at the orders of Masaryk, Benes, and Gajda. Many were shot.[40] But such draconian measures could not keep Czechs and Slovaks who had seen the truth from going over to the side of the Red Army.

In May 1918, the 1st Czechoslovak Revolutionary Regiment was formed in Penza. The 2nd International Regiment, which later took part in the fighting against Denikin's army in the south, was formed in Tambov the same month. In all, the Red Army had eleven Czechoslovak regiments, detached battalions, and companies, and many Czechs and Slovaks fought in the ranks of its other international units.

Thousands of legionaires left their units, realizing they had been deceived by their commanders. They had no desire to give their lives for the interests of the Czech bourgeoisie and the British, American, and French capitalists. On arriving in Vladivostok in June of 1918, the soldiers of the 4th Infantry Regiment (1st Czechoslovak Division) arrested their own officers and refused to fight against Russian workers and peasants.[41] The collapse of the Czechoslovak corps was further accelerated when the Red Army began to hit harder against the interventionist and counterrevolutionary forces.

The Czechoslovak Rebels' Patrons in London, Paris, and Washington

When the Czechoslovak rebels in Russia were on the verge of utter defeat, their patrons in London, Paris, and Washington, who earlier had pretended to have no part in organizing the rebellion, threw off the mask of neutrality. On June 4, 1918, the diplomatic representatives of Britain, France, the USA, and Italy delivered what amounted to an ultimatum to the Soviet government. It said that the governments of these countries (which had not yet broken completely with Moscow) regarded the Czechoslovak units as an allied force, and if they were disarmed or mistreated this would be considered a hostile act dictated by German influence.[42]

As this declaration showed once again, it was Britain, the USA, and France that had organized the rebellion and stood behind it. Armed forces not under the command of the Soviet republic were occupying its territory, fighting against the government and engaging in violence, robbery, and murder. Was their continued presence to be tolerated? Suppressing the Czechoslovak rebels was an internal affair, as reflected in the confident and forthright reply the Soviet government made on June 12: "The representatives of the

four powers will not regard the disarmament of the Czechoslovak units, which they describe as allied forces under their protection, as a hostile act. On the contrary, they will admit the necessity and appropriateness of the measures taken against the rebels." The Soviet government expressed hope that Britain, France, the USA, and Italy would condemn the Czechoslovak units for "their armed counter-revolutionary rebellion, which represents the most flagrant sort of interference in Russia's internal affairs." [43]

Of course no condemnation of the rebellion or approval of its suppression was forthcoming from London, Paris, Washington, or Rome. The men in power there were the rebels' true masters, their protectors and supporters. They meant to help the Czechs with armed force and weapons, not to pass judgement on them.

At the 47th meeting of military representatives to the Allied Supreme Council, which took place in Versailles on October 7, 1918, General Lockridge, the American representative who replaced General Bliss, declared that the United States was prepared to send a small force to Vladivostok to aid the Czechs. [44] The Supreme Council ordered that assistance be given to the Czechs, who were exhausted and critically weakened, it said, by their efforts over many months. The council further suggested that the interventionists and White Guards active in the north, in Siberia, and in the south of Russia cooperate closely with the Czechoslovak army, which it saw as the only center of resistance. [45]

On June 4, 1918, the British naval ministry sent a memorandum to the War Cabinet saying that the commander in chief of the Czech forces had asked the Allied command in Siberia (i.e., the interventionists) to help the rebels capture Irkutsk. Allied representatives requested that their governments support the Czechs, [46] and aid was accordingly given.

Who Armed the Czechoslovak Rebels?

Documents from British and American government archives, and from the archives of Kolchak (now at the disposal of Soviet scholars), prove beyond doubt that it was primarily Britain and the USA that armed the Czechoslovak rebels against the Soviet government. Precise data on the arms and ammunition furnished by the United States can be found in an addendum to a memo from the Imperial Gene-

ral Staff dated February 18, 1919.[47] The list includes 1,700 Colt machine guns, 1,000,000 cartridge belts, 250,000 rifles, 600,000 grenades, 4,300 revolvers and 2,600,000 ammunition clips for them, 1,000 saddles, 25 airplanes, 100 automobiles, 200 field telephones, 400 kilometers of telephone wire, 300,000 gas masks, and 250,000 blankets. From the British, the Czechs received 100,000 Remington rifles, 100 Vickers machine guns, and 4,736,400 rifle cartridges.[48]

In June of 1918 the British government also sent arms and ammunition for 20,000 Czech troops to northern Russia, which was occupied by interventionist forces. The British and Americans were planning a counterrevolutionary coup in Archangel, which actually took place on August 2. The Czechs never arrived, however, and the arms and ammunition meant for them were turned over to General Miller's White army.[49] Thus the documentary record shows that the British had no intention of evacuating the Czechs to France through Archangel; they meant to arm them and throw them into the fight against Soviet Russia.

Besides arms and ammunition, the British, American, and French governments gave the Czech command considerable amounts of money. The National Council received fifteen million roubles from France and England in the months from March through May alone. "For this sum," the Czechoslovak Communist newspaper *Průkopnik Svobody* wrote in June 1918, "the Czechoslovak army was sold to the French and English imperialists."[50] The Americans gave the Czech command twelve million dollars for arms and equipment.[51] But neither the Colts and Remingtons supplied so generously by Britain and the USA, nor the diplomatic protection of London, Paris, Washington and Rome, nor their loans could save the rebels from defeat.

Aid to Russian Counterrevolutionaries

The British, American, and French imperialists, working through their diplomats, consuls, and agents, and in concert with the Czech leaders and commanders, helped create counterrevolutionary organizations pretentiously calling themselves "local governments." They actively supported the Mensheviks, the SRs, and other enemies of Soviet Russia in their struggle against the workers and peasants.

The so-called Committee of the Constituent Assembly, a provisional government of SRs and White Guards, was

created after the capture of Samara in June of 1918. The interventionists and White Guards raised a rebellion in the Urals, hoping to capture Ekaterinburg (now Sverdlovsk), where they knew Tsar Nicholas II and his family were being held. They wanted to free the tsar and unite all counterrevolutionary forces, Russian and foreign, around him. Their scheme was foiled: on July 17, Nicholas Romanov was executed by order of the Ural regional Soviet. Ekaterinburg was captured by the White Guards a week later.[52]

When Tomsk was seized by the Czechs, the "provisional Siberian government," the SRs had set up there in February 1918, emerged from the underground to cooperate with them.[53] In late June, White Guards in Vladivostok staged a *coup* with the support of the interventionists and formed a "provisional government of autonomous Siberia" headed by the SR Derber and propped up by American and British bayonets.[54] In July, after the Czech', capture of Omsk, a "Siberian government" of White Guards, SRs, and Mensheviks was formed under Vologodsky.

In September, representatives of the "Samara directorate," the "provisional Siberian government," and local counterrevolutionaries met in Ufa and created a Menshevik-SR "provisional all-Russian government," also known as the "Ufa directorate." Its members included Avksentiev, Boldyrev, Vologodsky, Chaikovsky, and Zenzinov. By October, however, the advance of the Red Army left the heads of the "directorate" without any territory around Ufa. They fled to Omsk. Admiral Kolchak had returned to Russia by way of Japan and China, not without help and advice from British political leaders. Now he was appointed war minister of the Omsk "government."[55]

In November 1918, Kolchak proclaimed himself "supreme ruler of Russia." A battalion of the 25th Middlesex Regiment had arrived in Omsk from Vladivostok (its commander was the noted Labourite Colonel John Ward);[56] with its help Kolchak seized power and set up a puppet government. This action was ordered by the British, French, and American imperialists, who wanted the support of a military dictatorship in Russia. Kolchak had several of the government's "liberal" ministers shot.

The Allies hoped to bring all the counterrevolutionary "governments" and their armed forces under Kolchak's "all-Russian government" of White Guards. The Czechoslovaks gave Kolchak their active support.

The Czechoslovaks Seek to Return to their Homeland

Many of the Czechs and Slovaks came to understand that the National Council and the Allied diplomats had deceived them. They had made a tragic mistake in "turning their guns against their brothers, the masses of the Russian people," and were fighting an unjust battle on the side of "the vile champions of slavery." [57] More and more they insisted on going home. Many of them left their units or crossed the lines to join the defenders of Soviet Russia.

The Soviet government issued an appeal to the Czechoslovak people and the legionaires, declaring it took "an entirely friendly attitude even to those Czechoslovaks who not long ago bore arms against the Russian Republic." [58] It did not intend to deal harshly with the deceived legionaires. As for Czechs and Slovaks who had not taken part in the rebellion, they had continued to enjoy the rights of free citizens on the territory of Soviet Russia.

On October 31, 1918, the Soviet government broadcast by radio an appeal to the government of Czechoslovakia. The Red Army's victories over the Czechoslovaks and the White Guards, it said, showed that Czechoslovak units could not overthrow the revolutionary government of the Russian workers and peasants. Despite its success on the battlefield, the Soviet government earnestly wished to see an end to the useless and deplorable bloodshed. It informed the provisional Czechoslovak government that as soon as the legionaires laid down their arms it would guarantee their complete safety in passing through Russia on their way home. [59]

To continue the bloody battles between Czechoslovak and Russian soldiers would be a crime against the Russian people. The All-Russia Central Executive Committee accordingly addressed a special appeal to the soldiers of the Czechoslovak army on November 4, 1918, suggesting that they choose representatives on all sectors of the front and hold talks with the Red Army about returning to their homeland. The Soviet government was willing to let the Czechoslovaks pass both through the Ukraine and through Siberia, although the British and French capitalists, and Russian counterrevolutionaries, were still trying to block this.

"We ask you, Czech soldiers," the appeal said, "whether you want to be butchers—butchers of the Russian working masses at the moment when freedom is dawning over our country." [60]

Those legionaires who refused the offer would be regarded as "homeless adventurers, hirelings of world capital." The Soviet government would guarantee safe passage for those who wanted it, and fight without mercy against any who remained on Russian territory as "conscious enemies of the Russian people." Those who came over to the Soviet side would be considered "comrades in the common struggle for socialism, for the rule of workers and peasants throughout the world."[61] Many Czechoslovak soldiers responded to this call, but the Masaryk government ignored the appeal addressed to it.

Some 12,000 Russian citizens, prisoners of war of the former Austro-Hungarian regime, were still being held in Czechoslovakia.[62] The Czechoslovak government, imitating the policies of Britain, France, and the USA, placed all sorts of obstacles in the way of their return. It also encouraged propaganda among the Russian prisoners of war to get them to join the forces of Kolchak and Denikin, and later of Wrangel. Despite active efforts, recruits were few. The great majority of the prisoners of war were in sympathy with the Soviet regime. They demanded that they be returned, but the government continued to drag their feet.

Regardless of this unworthy treatment of Russian prisoners of war, the Soviet government continued to do everything possible to return the Czechs and Slovaks to their homeland. In a Soviet note dated December 25, 1918, the government of the Czechoslovak Republic was once again asked to indicate by what route and under what conditions soldiers who had surrendered to Soviet forces might be returned to their homeland.[63] Early in 1919, the Soviet government made an official offer through Professor Maxa, the president of the National Council in Russia, to send the Czechoslovaks home by way of central Russia.

"After many meetings and hesitations," Maxa recalled, "I received permission, at Lenin's insistence, for the return of the Czechs. I was asked to make it clear to Prague right away that the Soviet government would allow Czech troops to pass through its territory on condition that their weapons be transported in a separate train."[64]

When he arrived in Prague, Maxa informed Masaryk about all of this. But Masaryk, Benes, and Kramar, the first premier of the Czechoslovak Republic, refused the offer. To accept it, they argued, would be to betray the Allies.[65]

The Scheme of Benes and Churchill

It is clear from the negotiations Benes conducted with Churchill in the spring of 1919 that the Kramar-Masaryk-Benes government had not yet abandoned its plans to use Czechoslovak troops against the Soviet republic. Benes wanted to play on the soldiers' homesickness, to provoke them to further actions against Soviet Russia with the promise that they would return to Czechoslovakia by way of Archangel. They were to fight their way through to the British forces there, even though, as we have seen, the Soviet government was prepared to let them go home unhindered.

Benes wrote to Churchill on June 23, 1919, that if the Czechs were to be evacuated through Archangel they would probably have to fight again, on the side of Admiral Kolchak. Benes was more than willing to continue aiding Russian counterrevolutionaries, but he was worried the legionaires would refuse to do so. He therefore proposed that they be drawn in by deceit. They could be brought to Archangel under the pretence that they were on their way home. Once there, they would be combined with the British forces and thrown once more into the battle against Soviet Russia.[66]

General Maurice Janin, who in January of 1919 had been appointed commander in chief of Allied forces (including the Czechoslovaks) in eastern Russia and Siberia,[67] sent a disheartening reply from Omsk. He would be happy to carry out such a plan, but the Czechoslovak troops would not be taken in. If ordered to proceed to the front by way of Kotlas and Archangel, "they will not do it and will not trust us again."[68]

In late July and early August 1919, the ministers of Kolchak's "government" held a special meeting in Omsk with American, British, and French representatives. Generals Janin, Graves and Knox were also present. It was decided the Czechoslovaks should be evacuated through Vladivostok. Leaving them in Siberia, Janin said, would cause "considerable danger".[69]

The Red Army destroyed Kolchak's White Guards at the end of 1919. This marked the final collapse of the Czechoslovak rebellion. The "supreme ruler" himself was arrested by the Irkutsk revolutionary committee, tried, and sentenced to be shot. Such was the inglorious end of Admiral Kolchak, who had drenched Siberia with the blood of Russian workers and peasants.

The Soviet Republic Offers Peace to Czechoslovakia

Early in February of 1920, Soviet representatives concluded with the commanders of the Czechoslovak forces an agreement allowing them to sail for home from Vladivostok. The agreement detailed the order in which the Czechoslovak troops would advance and the assistance they would receive on their way east from the Red Army and Soviet authorities. The Czechs promised to remain neutral and not to aid anti-Soviet forces. The gold reserve of the RSFSR, which they had seized, was returned to the Irkutsk executive committee.[70]

The evacuation began. The Soviet authorities and representatives of the provisional government established in Vladivostok at the end of January 1920 (when workers and soldiers overthrew the government of White Guards) supplied all the military and technical help needed for the safe and unhindered evacuation of the Czechoslovaks.[71]

The government of the RSFSR, expressing the will of the workers and peasants of Russia, sought to normalize relations with all countries and thus set itself on the path of peaceful construction. On February 25, 1920, it sent a note to the Czechoslovak government confidently stating that there were "no serious obstacles in the way of entirely peaceful and friendly relations between the two republics."[72]

Through the fault of the Czechoslovak leaders, this hope remained unfulfilled. Benes vainly tried to justify the rebellion of the Czechoslovak corps and his country's involvement in the aggressive Allied coalition seeking to destroy the young Soviet republic. He and Masaryk thought the returned legionaires would help shore up the bourgeois regime in Czechoslovakia.[73]

Although the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie tried to conceal the fact from the working masses, the October Revolution helped free Czechoslovakia from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The Czechoslovak republic proclaimed on October 30, 1918 could never have been born without the victorious October Revolution and help of the fraternal Russian people and of Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik party.

Chapter 3

The Ring of Fire

By autumn of 1918, the Soviet republic was faced with enemies on every side. The flame of civil war kindled by the imperialists ranged north and south, east and west. Counterrevolutionary revolts (organized, as seen above, with the active assistance of foreign diplomats) broke out behind the lines. At this time Britain, France, and the USA were putting all their hopes on direct military intervention. The armistice was signed at Compiègne on November 11, 1918. Just three days later, the British War Cabinet passed a resolution (No. 502) that called for supplying arms and ammunition to Denikin [1] and sending more officers to Siberia.

A memorandum that Henry-Hughes Wilson, chief of the Imperial General Staff, sent to the War Cabinet at this time pointed out that "the policy of military intervention in Russia was adopted by His Majesty's government." Wilson outlined two alternative plans of battle. "The first," Wilson wrote, "is to create a ring of States all round Bolshevik Russia, the object being to prevent Bolshevism from spreading. The second alternative is to grasp the nettle firmly, by taking active military measures with a view to crushing Bolshevism definitely at the earliest possible date." This was, in fact, what the imperialists of Britain, France, the USA, and Japan were already trying to do. Wilson described the effort as "a concentric advance from the East, South and from the North, this latter based on the Baltic and directed against Moscow, forming the main operation." [2]

Wilson presented a detailed plan of attack. Poland was to head the struggle in the west. General Dowbór-Musnicki had an army of 70,000, plus Haller's corps from France. Arms and ammunition were to be shipped over the Black Sea to "orderly elements" (as Wilson called counterrevolutionaries) in the Ukraine. The Allies would supply arms to the national governments of Estonia, Lithuania, and Lat-

via. On the Northern front, Wilson suggested holding on to Archangel. Finally, he argued that the British and French should do everything possible to see that Russian counter-revolutionary armies were formed and trained in Siberia.

Wilson expressed confidence that once Denikin and Krasnov had received enough arms they would begin an offensive against the Bolsheviks. He also suggested that Black Sea ports be seized without delay.

On the night of November 16, British and French warships, followed by troop carriers, entered the Black Sea. Landings were made in Odessa, Nikolaev, Kherson, Sevastopol, and Novorossiisk. During November and December, 20,000 British troops were used to capture important points in Transcaucasia, including Baku, Tbilisi, and Batumi. In Transcaspia, they seized the road between Krasnovodsk and Kushka. In December the British seized Riga, Tallinn, and Liepaja (Libau) in anticipation of a strike against Petrograd.

Britain, France, and the USA, and also the Allied Supreme Council, were determined to use all available means to crush the Soviet republic. They accordingly took further steps to aid Russian counterrevolutionaries. The prime ministers of Britain, France, and Italy, at a conference held on November 27, 1917, resolved to give broader assistance to anti-Bolshevik forces in the south of Russia.[3] Intervention had entered a new stage, with Britain, France, and the USA sending their own armed forces to fight alongside the Russian counterrevolutionaries.

An Implacable Enemy of Soviet Russia

The Parliamentary elections held in December of 1918, shortly after the victory over Germany, brought to power a Conservative-Liberal coalition headed by Lloyd George. The most important government posts went to Conservatives such as Churchill, Chamberlain, Curzon, Bonar Law, and Birkenhead—all hostile to the young Soviet republic. Churchill became secretary of war.

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill was the son of Lord Randolph Churchill, and aristocratic descendant of the 1st duke of Marlborough. His political career began in Southern Africa at the time of the Boer War (1899-1902), one of the first wars in the imperialist era. A handful of Boers in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State heroically resisted the

British aggressors and emerged triumphant in the first stage of the war. Churchill, at that time a correspondent for the Conservative *Morning Post*, was captured by the Boers. Although his subsequent escape involved no feats of heroism, Churchill managed to make political capital out of it in his self-aggrandizing articles and books.

Churchill played a highly active part in setting off the imperialist First World War. As First Sea Lord in Asquith's cabinet, he was responsible for the notorious Dardenelles operation of 1915, in which British battleships and cruisers attempted to seize Constantinople. The plan showed a complete ignorance of naval strategy and tactics. Turkish shore batteries sank or seriously damaged many British ships. Churchill was forced to resign. Offended by the lack of appreciation for his "talents" as a naval commander, he left for France to serve as a lieutenant colonel in the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers. But he had not lost his taste for playing politics.

In December of 1916, Lloyd George created a new government with the support of the Conservative opposition. Military affairs were placed in the hands of a small War Cabinet, consisting of the prime minister, the Conservatives Milner and Curzon, and Arthur Henderson of the Labour Party. Churchill was given a modest post as minister of munitions. But he was a man who always wanted to be first —the baby at the christening, the bride at the wedding. When Lloyd George's coalition government came to power on December 14, 1918, Churchill became secretary of war. This gave him scope to display his extraordinary "abilities" in quelling popular revolutions. He was an implacable enemy of the Soviet people, a man whose stated aim was to stifle Bolshevism in its cradle.

In the first half of 1919, Britain, France, and the USA were putting all their bets on Admiral Kolchak. The imperialists wanted the support of a military dictatorship in Russia. At their orders, Kolchak had in November of 1918 overthrown the SR-Cadet directorate in Omsk calling itself the "provisional All-Russia government" (in which he served as war minister) and proclaimed himself "supreme ruler" of Russia. The Allies meant to bring all the counterrevolutionary "governments" and armed forces in Russia under Kolchak. General Denikin, in the south, agreed to follow his orders.

British and French representatives in Omsk signed a spe-

cial agreement with Kolchak on January 16, 1919. General Janin of France was named commander in chief of Allied forces acting in eastern Russia and in Siberia to the west of Lake Baikal.[4] The forces of the USA (under General Graves) and Japan were to act independently. Kolchak promised to conduct all his operations in compliance with general directives passed through Janin.

As Britain's new secretary of war, Churchill threw himself into the battle against the Soviet republic, mobilizing the forces of internal and external counterrevolution to crush Bolshevism. Eloquent testimony to this can be found in newly accessible documents from official British and American archives, and also in the archives of Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich, and Miller, which were captured by the Red Army.

British archival documents tell us that the cabinet held a special meeting in February of 1919 to discuss all aspects of "the situation in Russia"—that is to say, continued intervention and overt support for Russian counterrevolutionaries, especially Kolchak and Denikin.

One of the first documents Churchill produced in his new capacity was a note to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Henry-Hughes Wilson, dated February 14, 1919. In it, Churchill asked:

"1. What means are there of aiding the Russian armies to wage war upon the Bolshevism? 2. What are the actual measures which the General Staff would propose, generally and in each of the theatres? 3. What numbers of non-Russian soldiers, and particularly of British soldiers would be required? 4. At what do you estimate the cost—a) of obtaining and maintaining the British personnel? b) of maintaining the Russians that are in the field or are required to be raised?"[5]

The subject in hand involved aid to the White armies, and also the overall strategy for the war against Soviet Russia and the tactics to be followed on individual fronts. With regard to practical help for the counterrevolutionaries, Churchill wanted to know:

"a) Ought we to evacuate Murmansk and Archangel, and if so, when and how?
b) What assistance can be given by the British Fleet and Army to the Estonians and the Finns . . .?
c) In what way is Poland to be aided? Should it to be assigned to the French?

d) What is the role of the French, Greek and Romanian troops at or in the neighbourhood of Odessa?
e) What is the present situation of General Denikin's Army, including that of General Krasnoff? ... What aid does he require? What are we doing to help him?
f) What is the precise role and present situation of the British forces holding the Batoum-Baku Railway, and of the British naval forces holding the Caspian Sea? ... To what extent are they aiding General Denikin's Army by their presence?" [6]

The last series of questions had to do with British policy in Siberia and aid to Kolchak's army.

> "What is your policy for Siberia? Is it contrary to British interests that Government should: a) against our will and b) with our encouragement come to terms with the Japanese in order to procure effective Japanese intervention in Western Siberia? In what form and to what extent could British aid be given to the Omsk Government with 10 or 12 thousand volunteers employed in technical offensive services of highest order?" [7]

The next day, February 15, Churchill received a note from Wilson answering his questions. This document contains detailed information on the policy of intervention and the efforts being directed against Soviet Russia. It bears the title "Note on Allied Policy in Russia from the Military Point of View." The main text occupies twenty-five pages. [8]

The section on the "General Strategic Situation" noted that the Bolsheviks had made gains on the Orenburg front, at Archangel, and in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. They were presently concentrating on the Southern front, it said, where they intended to crush Krasnov and Denikin. The Allies, on the other hand, meant to go on doing all they could to support anti-Bolshevik forces. [9]

The note went on to describe the military situation of the Russian counterrevolutionaries and the interventionists, and the operations they were planning in the north, in the Baltic region, in the south, and in Siberia. There was no real reason, it said, to keep interventionist forces in the north. British soldiers were unwilling to go on fighting for an unjust cause. At the same time, the General Staff admitted that "the withdrawal of Allied support from anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia would entail their collapse." [10]

The General Staff proposed an offensive along the Northern Dvina, towards Kotlas, so as to join hands with Kolchak's forces advancing from the direction of Vyatka. [11] (At this time Kolchak's armies were temporarily in the ascendant, having seized Perm at the end of 1918.)

In the Baltic area, General Yudenich was planning to put together an army of 30,000 men for an offensive on Petrograd. The General Staff recommended sending more "volunteers," arms, and ammunition to the counterrevolutionaries so as to radically improve their position. General Munnerheim had said he could occupy Petrograd with the Finnish forces under his command. "The occupation of Petrograd would have considerable moral effect and would constitute a threat against Moscow, tending to withdraw troops from decisive fronts." [12] The General Staff was forced to report, however, that the Red Army had cleared the White Guards out of Estonia entirely and advanced into Latvia as far as Riga, Ventspils (Windau), and Liepaja.

There were also plans to bring bourgeois Poland into the fight against the Soviet republic. Its forces numbered 30,000; when Haller's army arrived from France, this figure might reach 90,000. "It would be of course necessary for the Allies to supply the arms and the transport and probably also the clothing for these troops.... This Army should be utilised for an advance into Russia up to the line Vilno-Minsk." [13] The object here was to threaten Moscow.

In the south-west the Romanian army, 250,000 strong, stood at the ready. If things went well, it could join its efforts to those of the Polish army and the armies of the Baltic states, creating a united front.

"The main blow against the Bolsheviks' stronghold at Moscow will come from South and South-East Russia," the General Staff concluded. "In the South-East General Denikin and Krasnoff have at present a force of some 130,000 men under arms consisting principally of Don and Kuban Cossacks, but confidently expect to raise their number to between 200,000 and 250,000." [14] In the Ukraine, Denikin would receive aid from Petlyura, who had replaced Skoropadsky as hetman. "Denikin will extend his influence to all ports of South Russia and the Crimea working with the French forces round Odessa." [15] The note continued: "The second stage will be a gradual advance northwards from the Black Sea so as to recover the main centres of the Ukraine, coupled with a vigorous advance on the right flank of Mos-

cow ... on Voronezh and up to the Volga. This last advance would assist and be assisted by the operations of Kolchak's Army from Ufa towards Samara and Pensa." [16]

The Imperial General Staff considered it necessary for the Allies to supply Denikin's army, 100,000 strong, with rifles, machine guns, cannon of different calibers, and tanks from March through May 1919. It planned for British forces to continue their occupation of the Caucasus and later to extend their control to the Volga, where they would establish contact with the Ural Cossacks and ultimately with the left flank of Kolchak's Siberian army. "Orenburg being captured," the note said, "a general advance might be initiated in the North from Perm toward Viatka with the object of establishing communication through Kotlas with the Archangel forces ... and in the South from Krasnyi Ufimsk and Ufa toward Moscow." [17]

Special emphasis was laid on the need for an energetic offensive by Kolchak's forces. They were to unite with Denikin's army on the Volga, in the region of Samara, Penza, and Balashov, and then go on together with it towards Moscow.

What the Imperial General Staff had in mind, then, was a general offensive on Soviet Russia. The interventionists and General Miller would advance from the north, Yudenich from the Baltic area, Poland and Romania from their own borders. Denikin would strike from the south, Kolchak from Siberia. The British politicians and military men hoped to choke the life out of the Soviet Republic with an iron ring of fronts.

In conclusion, the note stressed the importance of a united effort by the Allies and Japan. "If the Allies are prepared to sink their minor interests in the furtherance of the main object, namely the defeat of Bolshevism," the note said, responsibility for each front should be clearly allocated.

Forces on the Eastern front were to be supported jointly by the USA and Japan. These powers should be given every encouragement to pursue a policy of intervention. [18] The Southern front was to be the responsibility of the English; Poland, Romania, and the Ukraine, of the French. The USA would take charge of intervention in Siberia and in Finland, Lithuania, and Latvia. Active operations were to be initiated simultaneously on all these fronts. The General Staff believed that if the Allies were determined to overthrow the Bolsheviks, and were ready to use all means to do so, they would surely succeed. [19]

The General Staff recommended that an Allied Council for Russian Affairs be created to handle practical questions involved in the intervention. Its seat might be in Washington, Paris, or London, and it was to have political, military, and economic sections.

In addition to this highly detailed plan of battle against Soviet Russia and aid to Russian counterrevolutionaries, the note includes five appendices. The first presents a general assessment of the situation in Russia. It was prepared before Churchill's request for information. The second gives data on existing counterrevolutionary forces and foreign troops in Russia, and on forces newly mobilized for the fight against Bolshevism.

The third appendix is an estimate of the Red Army's forces. The fourth details what Britain was doing, and planned to do in the future, to aid Kolchak and Denikin. The fifth concerns arms and ammunition supplied to counterrevolutionaries in the north of Russia and the Baltic states, and (once again) to Denikin and Kolchak.

The second appendix is of particular interest. It gives the strength of Russian counterrevolutionary and foreign forces on February 15, 1919, and the expected strength on May 15 of that year.

Front	Nationality of forces	Present Strength	Strength on May 15 (1919)
Archangel	Allied	23,000	30,000
Murmansk	Russian	11,000	15,000
Finland	Finns	24,000	45,000
Estonia	Estonians and Scandinavian volunteers	16,000	20,000
Latvia and Lithuania	Latvians and Lithuanians		
	Russians	10,000	40,000
Poland	Poles	30,000	90,000
Galicia	Czechoslovaks	32,000	100,000
Bessarabia	Romanians	103,000	250,000
Ukraine	French	10,000	10,000
	Greeks	3,000	43,000
	Russians, etc.	3,000	30,000
South-East Russia	Don Cossacks Voronezh Army Volunteer Army	130,000	250,000
Astrakhan	Ural Cossacks	15,000	15,000
Turkestan	Dutov's and Semirechensk Cossacks	25,000	26,000

	Turkmens	3,000	15,000
	Bukharans	—	15,000
	British and Indians	2,000	3,000
Eastern Russia	Siberians and Russians	81,000	200,000
	Czechoslovaks	—	42,000
	Poles	—	8,000
	Serbs	1,000	1,000
	Romanians	—	4,000
	Allied	4,000	44,000
	Total:	527,000	1,296,000

Even by these figures, which were clearly set low, by February of 1919 the interventionists and counterrevolutionaries had forces numbering more than half a million, and by mid May their strength was to surpass 1,200,000. Other sources give different figures. A document drawn up at Kolchak's headquarters shows that by May 1, 1919, Kolchak had managed, by coercion and terror, to put together a force of 681,000: 273,000 in the Siberian Army, 270,000 in the Western Army, 50,000 in the Orenburg Army, and 88,000 in the Ural Army and the forces in Semirechiye. Together with their reserves, Kolchak's armies reached a strength of 871,000. * [20]

According to other figures from British archives, interventionist forces numbered 202,400 by February of 1919: 44,600 British, 13,600 French, 13,700 American, 80,000 Japanese, 42,000 Czechoslovaks, 3,000 Italians, 2,500 Serbs, and 3,000 Greeks. [21]

Later the number of Japanese troops in Siberia grew to 150,000. In March of 1919, French Minister of Foreign Affairs Pichon said in the Chamber of Deputies that interventionist forces in Siberia numbered 180,000. [22]

Counterrevolutionary Headquarters in Paris

In January of 1919, the victors in the First World War convened a peace conference in Paris. This conference served as the political and military headquarters of world reaction and counterrevolution, a center for intervention against

* The British figures, and accounts by Soviet historians saying that Kolchak's army numbered 300,000, thus stand in need of correction.

Soviet Russia and for the suppression of the revolutionary movement all over the world. Here plans were elaborated for conducting military campaigns against the Soviet republic, speeding arms to Russian counterrevolutionaries, and forcing Soviet Russia into economic and political isolation. One of the conference's main concerns was the so-called Russian question—that is, the plan to divide and enslave Russia by escalating Allied intervention and destroying the Soviet republic.

No Soviet representatives were included in the conference, but members of the so-called political council were present. This council included among others Lvov (formerly head of the first provisional government), Sazonov (who had served under the tsar as minister of foreign affairs), Chaikovsky, and the former ambassadors Girs, Izvolsky, and Bakhmetiev.[23] General Shcherbachev acted as military representative of Kolchak and Denikin to the council.

The heads of the British, American, French, and other delegations in Paris agreed that a conference should be held in January of 1919 on the Turkish island of Prinkipo (Buyukada), near Istanbul, to resolve the "Russian question." All of the counterrevolutionary groups operating on Russian territory were to take part. The imperialists' main goal was to halt the advance of the Red Army, which by that time had already liberated from foreign aggressors Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Byelorussia, the grain-producing areas of the Ukraine, and the Donets Basin—territories with a population of forty million. Preparations for Kolchak's campaign were also to be discussed.

On January 23, a Soviet radio station in Tsarskoye Selo picked up a report from England saying that representatives of "all organized groups in Russia exercising political power" would meet at a conference in mid February. The Soviet republic had not been invited; the imperialists would have liked to pretend that it did not want to conduct negotiations with them. Nonetheless, following its policy of peace, the Soviet government dispatched a radiogram on February 4, 1919, informing Britain, the USA, France, Italy, and Japan that it was willing to begin immediate negotiations for an end to the fighting. It was even prepared to compromise on important issues, provided the further development of the republic was not endangered.[24] It was willing to pay the debts of the tsarist government and to grant economic concessions to foreign capitalists. As Lenin point-

ed out, this was in some ways a return to the tactics used at Brest.[25] The Soviet government was willing to buy off the capitalist predators in order to save the lives of Russian workers and peasants.

But the Allies declined even this proposal, advantageous as it was for themselves. At a meeting of the Council of Ten on February 14-15, Wilson, Clemenceau, and Sonnino agreed to Churchill's suggestion for broader intervention. It was also decided, again at Churchill's urging, that Allied advisers "at once ... draw up a plan for concerted action against the Bolsheviks."[26] An Allied Council for Russian Affairs—in other words, for escalating intervention in Soviet Russia—was to be created in accordance with the plans of Britain's Imperial General Staff. Once preparations for Kolchak's counteroffensive were complete, the Prinkipo conference was called off.

A note from the Imperial General Staff dated February 15, 1919, states: "There is now thought that the Prinkipo proposals have very seriously shaken Kolchak's position and that unless the Allies make some definite statements ... his fall may be brought about."[27] The French government also lost interest in the conference. The "governments" of Kolchak in Omsk, Denikin in Ekaterinodar, and Miller in Archangel protested energetically against it.

Kolchak, fearing that negotiations with Soviet Russia would hasten the collapse of his Siberian armies, issued a special order rejecting in the most categorical terms "all talks of an agreement with the Bolsheviks."[28] Sazonov, his minister of foreign affairs, said Kolchak would not accept any suggestion for a conference and would not "sit down at the same table with Bolsheviks."[29] The "government" of General Miller also sent a telegram to the cabinet saying it refused to attend an Allied conference to which Bolshevik representatives were invited.[30] According to Kolchak, Denikin, and Miller, such an invitation would give tacit recognition to the Bolshevik leaders.

William Bullitt's Mission

In March of 1919, William Bullitt went to Soviet Russia on a secret mission on behalf of Woodrow Wilson and Lloyd George. Bullitt was head of the secret information department of the American delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, and an experienced espionage agent. His mission was

nothing more than a repetition of the Prinkipo conference manoeuver.

The terms Bullitt had to offer were draconian. In reply, Lenin proposed an agreement calling for: 1) immediate cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of foreign forces from Russia, and an end to military aid for anti-Soviet governments; 2) removal of blockades and resumption of two-way trade. The Soviet government was willing to compromise, to pay debts and grant concessions to capitalists. Lenin said: "The price of the blood of our workers and soldiers is too high for us; we shall pay you businessmen a heavy tribute as the price of peace; ... to preserve the lives of our workers and peasants." [31]

Bullitt left Soviet Russia in mid March. From Helsinki, he sent a telegram to Wilson, Lansing, and House. Bullitt was compelled to acknowledge Soviet Russia's economic, political, and military stability. His telegram reported that the government had the support of the workers and peasants, and was energetically engaged in constructive work. "The Soviet government," it said, "is firmly established and the Communist Party is strong politically and morally... it is my conviction that the Soviet government is the only constructive force in Russia today." [32]

Bullitt's conclusion offered little comfort to his masters: "No Government save a Socialist Government can be set up in Russia today except by foreign bayonets, and any government so set up will fall the moment such support is withdrawn." [33] On returning to Paris, he presented Lenin's proposal to Woodrow Wilson and Lloyd George.

But once Kolchak's offensive began on the Eastern front, the imperialists had no more need for such tactics. On April 16, in response to a question in Parliament, Lloyd George denied having sent Bullitt on any mission whatever. Bullitt himself was astonished at such deceit of the public. Lenin wrote that Allied politicians were "showing themselves to the whole world to be either rogues or infants." [34] Soviet diplomats saw through the schemes of Lloyd George and Wilson, who were exposed for all to see as aggressors determined to escalate intervention against the Soviet republic.

Kolchak's Campaign Against Soviet Russia

Early in March of 1919, Kolchak launched an offensive. His armies and those of Denikin, Yudenich, and Miller

represented more than counterrevolution in Russia; they were the shock troops of international imperialism and reaction. Now that the Allies had defeated Germany, they could concentrate their strength and attention on the battle against Soviet Russia. The first Allied campaign had begun.

Kolchak's armies moved across the Urals towards Moscow. Denikin advanced from the south together with the White Cossack armies of the Don and Kuban, also under his orders. Yudenich was to move on Petrograd, supported by the British navy and White Estonians and Finns. By the middle of 1919 Estonia and large parts of Latvia and Lithuania were occupied. General Miller was preparing for an offensive from the north in concert with the Anglo-American and French interventionists. These forces were to join Kolchak's in the neighbourhood of Kotlas.

Kolchak's armies struck the main blow. Of course neither his operations, nor those of Denikin, Yudenich, or Miller, could ever have attained such large scope, or even been more than local actions, without massive Allied and US aid in the form of troops, instructors, arms, financing, and so on. General Graves, who commanded the American interventionist forces in Siberia, admitted that Kolchak could not have lasted a month without Allied support.[35]

Figures from the British Imperial General Staff, although obviously set low, show that Kolchak had the assistance of 80,000 Japanese troops, 8,500 American, 6,100 British and Canadian, 1,100 French, and also Czechoslovaks, Italians, Poles, Serbs, and Romanians. General Knox's military mission alone brought 2,000 British officers to Siberia. Again according to British figures, the armies of Denikin and other counterrevolutionaries in the south included 25,000 British fighting men and 10,000 French.

It should be noted that each of the imperialist powers had agreed to provide aid for White Guard armies in those parts of Russia that were to be included in its "sphere of influence." Thus it was the Americans who did most for Kolchak; they intended to have Siberia for themselves. Denikin and Miller got assistance mainly from Britain, which planned to seize the Caucasus and northern Russia. Nonetheless, Britain also did much to arm Kolchak, who thanked Churchill accordingly.[36]

Kolchak received 392,994 rifles and 15,618 cartridges from the USA in 1919 alone.[37] The United States also provided airplanes, armoured cars, tanks, 400 trucks and automo-

biles, uniforms, gun mountings, motors, locomotives, track, and additional arms, ammunition, and materiel in great quantity.[38]

British aid to Kolchak was also extensive. In accordance with decisions made by the War Cabinet on September 25 and December 6, 1918, Britain supplied arms and equipment for 200,000 men.[39] Kolchak received 100,000 rifles, over 2,000 machine guns, ordnance, howitzers, planes, 262,000,000 rounds of ammunition, artillery shells—in all, as much as 200,000 tons of munitions[40]—as well as 400 automobiles, 3,000 telephones, telephone wire, radio transmitters, saddles, harness, etc.[41] In addition, 200,000 complete uniforms were supplied through General Knox, including 200,000 greatcoats, 200,000 hats, 400,000 jerseys, 400,000 pairs of boots, 400,000 blankets, and other equipment.[42]

On April 16, Lloyd George told Parliament, "We should support General Denikin, Admiral Kolchak, and General Kharkoff,"[43] in his confusion turning the name of a city into yet another counterrevolutionary general. In February, Churchill told Nabokov, who had been the tsar's charge d'affaires in London, that the ministry of war would continue to supply everything needed to the British and Russian forces fighting the Bolsheviks.[44]

At a special conference held in Omsk in July and August 1919, the Allies agreed to create, arm, and equip an army of one million for Kolchak. The USA was represented by its ambassador to Japan (Morris); Britain by High Commissioner Charles Eliot. Also present were generals Graves, Janin, Knox, and Matsushima, and Kolchak's "ministers." Kolchak wanted to expand his armies to twenty corps, and accordingly increased his requests for arms and equipment from the USA and Britain. His quartermasters intended to buy 1,000,000 greatcoats in the USA, 1,200,000 pairs of boots, 1,000,000 jerseys, 50,000 blankets, and other supplies.[45] Most of what was purchased later fell into the hands of the Red Army. Britain's aid to Kolchak exceeded 50,000,000 pounds sterling.[46]

The armies of Kolchak and Denikin were the Allied imperialists' main hope. At the beginning of 1919, the British General Staff and ministry of war took a gloomy view of the political and military situation in Siberia, but by March they were considerably more optimistic.

Charles Eliot, the British High Commissioner with Kolchak's army, reported to London in March that Kolchak

had strengthened his position in the country.[47] The imperialist predators, after some infighting, had established joint control over the Trans-Siberian railroad.

At the end of April, the ministry of war sent a secret telegram to General Knox, who was with Kolchak's army. The British government, it said, recognized Kolchak as "the paramount factor in the military situation in Russia".[48] The British, and particularly the ministry of war, were pleased by the important successes recently achieved on the front lines. Churchill extended his most cordial congratulations.

The British ministry for war outlined three directions Kolchak's offensive might take. He might advance by his left flank and try and effect a direct junction with Denikin. He might move directly on Moscow, supported by Denikin and the counterrevolutionary and interventionist forces around Archangel, and thereby "place himself by this single operation in the heart of Russia." Or finally, he might move by his right flank to Vyatka and Vologda, from there proceeding south towards Moscow or west towards Petrograd.[49] The War Cabinet, the war ministry, and Churchill himself assured Kolchak he would receive every possible assistance from Britain.

It was only a few days until General Knox reported from Vladivostok on Kolchak's plans. The Siberian army would occupy Kazan and Vyatka, after which the two main armies would move on towards Moscow. Knox wrote that Kolchak thought it highly important to establish communication with Denikin and the counterrevolutionaries in the north. Yudenich would advance towards Petrograd. Knox was hopeful that Moscow would be captured.[50] Kolchak's armies mounted their offensive all along the 2,000 kilometers of the Eastern front. With their considerable superiority in manpower and equipment, they were able, during March and April, to capture Izhevsk, Ufa, Belebey, and Sterlitamak. Advance units came within 80 kilometers of Kazan and Samara, and within 100 kilometers of Simbirsk.

British Aid to Denikin

Denikin's army went over to the offensive at the same time as Kolchak's, making the threat to Soviet Russia much more formidable. The two armies were to join forces somewhere near Saratov and proceed together against Moscow.

It was Kolchak's armies that struck the main blow. Denikin's army was consigned to an auxiliary role in the Allies' first campaign against the Soviet republic, although the British General Staff and ministry of war tried to put it in first place.

On April 26, 1919, Denikin had signed a declaration saying that the main goals of the armed forces in the south were "the destruction of Bolshevik Anarchy" and "the establishment of a powerful, united and indivisible Russia". [51]

General Holman, head of the British military mission, wrote in a memorandum to the government that Denikin's army had been in a sorry state. "By 1st April," he reported, "all the Donets Basin and the greater part of the Don had been overrun by the Bolsheviks". When British aid arrived, however, "the effect was magical". [52]

Prior to February 15, 1919, Britain supplied equipment—including airplanes, tanks, and cannon of different calibers, rifles—for an army of 100,000. Later, additional arms and equipment, for an army of 150,000, were sent through the ports of Batumi and Novorossiisk, which the interventionists had captured. Thus Britain equipped 250,000 men in all: twelve infantry divisions and four cavalry. By mid February, the British alone had given Denikin's army 175,000 rifles, more than 700 cannon of different calibers, 400,000,000 rounds of ammunition, more than 2,100,000 artillery shells, 5,000 Vickers and Lewis machine guns, 12 tanks, 124 airplanes, more than 1,000 motor vehicles, 2,500 telephones, 250,000 complete uniforms, and much else.

Military missions were sent to organize this assistance and to observe action in the field. General Poole was first assigned to this work. After him came General Briggs, then General Holman. In May 1919, General Milne, commander in chief of British expeditionary forces in the Middle East, visited Denikin's headquarters in Ekaterinodar and promised that Britain would continue its aid. "The general declared," Sazonov reported to Omsk, "that the British government had decided to continue material and moral support for our cause. Agreement was reached concerning Trans-Caucasia and the northern Caucasus". [53]

There could be no question, however, of agreement with Denikin concerning the territories seized by the interventionists in the Caucasus. The British capitalists, who now saw themselves as masters of the oil fields there, refused to

admit Denikin's armies. The commander of British forces in the Caucasus assured Noy Zhardaniya, head of the Menshevik puppet government of Georgia, that the Volunteer Army would not advance into that region. [54]

Denikin's troops, armed with British weapons, dressed in British greatcoats, and provided with rations, recovered from the blows of the Red Army. By spring they had captured the northern Caucasus, the Kuban basin, most of the Don district, and part of the Donets basin. Now they rushed towards the Volga to join forces with Kolchak.

The "government" in Omsk learned of these plans from Nabokov in London, who was informed by General Briggs, head of the military mission. "As Denikin sees it, the next step is to effect communication, through the forces in the Urals, with the southern flank of the Siberian army," Nabokov telegraphed to Omsk in July. "This operation has already begun, and he requests an offensive along the front between Samara and Saratov, or thereabouts." [55] As part of the effort to coordinate operations, Denikin made a special declaration placing his army under the orders of Admiral Kolchak.

Despite generous help from foreign reactionaries, Denikin was halted by the Red Army along the line reaching from the Seym River through Liski to Balashov.

The Baltic Region in the Plans of the British and Americans

Foreign imperialists, seeing an opportunity in the difficulties that beset Soviet Russia, helped the counterrevolutionary landowners and bourgeoisie, and the White Guards, to overthrow the Baltic states' Soviet governments. The imperialists planned to use this region as a bridgehead for an attack on Petrograd, the cradle of the revolution. The Allies, having directly supported the formation of bourgeois governments in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, enlisted them in the battle against Soviet Russia. Even those who recently had been enemies were united in this cause: England, the USA, France, and Germany allied themselves militarily against Soviet Russia. At the orders of the British, French, and Americans, General von der Goltz's German army ravaged the Baltic states, the Ukraine, and Byelorussia.

By a decision of the Allied Supreme Council, the USA, France, and Italy authorized Britain's sending a military mission to organize counterrevolutionary forces in the Baltic states. In May of 1919, General Hubert Gough was appointed head of this mission. He received detailed instructions from the ministry of war and the Imperial General Staff, telling him:

"a) To study the military situation in Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; to report to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on the best means of assisting the Baltic States to provide for their own defence against Bolshevik forces. . .

"b) To advise the Provisional Governments or other de facto authorities of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on all questions concerning the organization, equipment and training of the local forces."

Most important, Gough was "to advise these governments on the best means of defence against the Bolsheviks." [56]

Gough was also to organize and oversee the military missions in Helsingfors, Revel, Riga, and Kovno. The main purpose of his mission was to aid the White Guards under Yudenich with arms, ammunitions, and supplies. By May, Yudenich had forces numbering approximately 2,800. He claimed that given Allied arms and equipment he could put together a corps of 15,000 and with it capture Petrograd, then Moscow. [57]

General Gough set about his task energetically; the list of his misdeeds in the Baltic region is a long one. A special memorandum prepared by the Imperial General Staff records that he strengthened the White Estonian army, reorganized the Latvian army, and restructured Ulmanis's cabinet. Gough also helped throw together the counterrevolutionary "north-western government" of Lianozov and Yudenich (Lianozov, a Cadet leader, was made premier; Yudenich, minister of war), which was intended to unite all the counterrevolutionary forces in the Baltic region for the drive on Petrograd. The first act of the new "government" was to ask Britain, the USA, and France to continue providing materiel and financial support. [58]

England and France were generous in equipping the corps under Yudenich. By the middle of February, 1919, England alone had provided 40,000 rifles, 500 Vickers and Lewis machine guns, 50,000,000 rounds of ammunition, airplanes, cannon, howitzers, 200 field telephones, and other

materiel.[59] All this was delivered by American ships through the ports of Riga and Libau. The United States sent Yudenich 25,000 more rifles, and also foodstuffs.

As soon as he arrived in Estonia, Gough began to demand that Yudenich take Petrograd immediately. "The forces that you have, backed by the airplanes, ammunition, and tanks we are providing, are quite sufficient to capture Petrograd," he counseled.[60] Kolchak ordered that the White armies mount a simultaneous offensive on all fronts. The offensive by Yudenich was meant to draw troops away from the Siberian front. In June, Kolchak officially appointed Yudenich commander in chief of all land and sea forces on the North-West front.[61]

Foreign reactionaries did not limit themselves to using the White Guards under Yudenich. In 1919 a British battle fleet of more than 100 ships, commanded by Rear Admiral Cowan, was actively involved in the intervention against Soviet Russia, bombarding ports on the Baltic and supporting Yudenich. There were also plans to bring in White Finnish troops. "The British ministry of war," Sazonov telegraphed to Omsk on June 21, "believes it would be expedient to use Finnish forces against Petrograd."[62] The Finnish military, however, demanded that in return the Allies and Kolchak recognize Finland's independence and grant certain territorial compensations: they wanted Murmansk, Karelia (all the way to the Svir River and Lake Onega), and access to the Arctic Ocean. If these conditions were granted, Mannerheim promised, 100,000 bayonets would advance on Petrograd immediately. But Kolchak's autocratic dreams were in direct conflict with the desire of bourgeois states on the edges of the former empire to achieve national independence.

British and American aid to Yudenich and the offensives of Kolchak and Denikin enabled the White Guards to push the Red Army back towards Petrograd. Counterrevolutionaries abroad were hourly expecting to hear that Yudenich had captured the city. Acting on directions from Britain and the USA, Kolchak ordered Yudenich to set up a provisional civilian administration once Petrograd had been taken.[63]

These plans remained unrealized. The Bolshevik Party rallied the proletariat of Petrograd and the heroic sailors of the Baltic Fleet for the fight against Yudenich. The Red Army mounted an offensive all along the front. By the

end of August, the troops under Yudenich had been routed.

Kolchak's temporary gains inspired such hopes among the ruling echelons in England that the Foreign Office even suggested that the government recognize him as the "supreme ruler of Russia"—first of all because it was feared America, France, and possibly Japan would take this step. More important, recognizing Kolchak would improve the situation in Archangel, helping to shore up the "government" of Chaikovsky and Miller, which the General Staff and ministry of war quite rightly feared would collapse as soon as Allied forces were withdrawn.[64] Lloyd George was so carried away that he began making plans for a meeting between the Allies and Kolchak in Moscow.

On May 26, the Allied Supreme Council sent a note (signed by Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Wilson, Orlando, and Prince Saionji) to Kolchak. It said the Allies were prepared to recognize him if he observed certain "conditions," which amounted to a program for enslaving Russia. Kolchak lost no time in accepting the most important of these, and on June 12 the Allied Supreme Council expressed satisfaction with his reply, thereby extending its *de facto* recognition. But all this could not prevent the defeat of Kolchak's armies.

The Bolshevik Party's Central Committee and the government ordered the command of the Red Army to work out a plan for a counteroffensive. The execution of this plan was entrusted to Mikhail Frunze, a talented proletarian leader who commanded the Southern Army group on the Eastern front. He supervised the conduct of several successful operations, which completely ruined Kolchak's strategy. The Allies rushed in additional help, but the counterrevolutionary armies were beaten nonetheless.

The main factor in the downfall of overt armed intervention by the imperialist powers was the Red Army, which dealt the White Guard admirals and generals a crushing defeat. Furthermore, the revolutionary proletariat of Russia undermined the willingness of Allied soldiers to fight against socialism. As Lenin wrote: "We defeated the Entente countries by depriving them of the workers and peasants in soldiers' uniforms."[65]

The British and French interventionists were forced to leave the Crimea and Odessa in April, the Transcaspian region of Central Asia in June, and Baku in August. In

September and October, Allied forces were driven out of Archangel and Murmansk.

Churchill Alters His Tactics

The Red Army had dealt crushing blows to Kolchak, Yudenich, and Denikin. The White Guards and interventionist forces were increasingly in disarray. In the capitalist countries, working people were conducting a revolutionary struggle, demanding an end to the war against Soviet Russia. All this forced international imperialism to change its tactics.

In mid 1919, the Allies switched from overt intervention with their own forces to covert intervention, setting the bourgeois governments of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Finland, and other countries against the Soviet republic. At the same time they sought to make the fullest use of counterrevolutionary forces within Russia.

This meant intervention in the guise of stepping up the civil war. The USA and Britain retained overall control in military operations and in equipping and financing anti-Soviet armies. The new campaign was to involve France, Italy, Japan, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland; the counterrevolutionary forces in the Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia; Denikin's army, and what was left of Kolchak's.

"The overall military and international situation indicates," we read in a report to Kolchak written at that time, "that a turning point has been reached in the earlier methods of struggle.... The powers are evidently looking for another solution. The question of bringing in the smaller nations is being raised."[66] The imperialists wanted to involve all the state entities that had arisen on the peripheries of Russia, which were to serve as a *cordon sanitaire* protecting Western Europe from Bolshevism.[67]

Denikin Rushes Towards Moscow

The Allies also undertook a second campaign, in the autumn of 1919. The failure of Kolchak's offensive left no choice but to concentrate on efforts to aid Denikin. At that time the south of Russia, occupied by Denikin's army, was the most dangerous segment of the front in the civil war.

On June 30, with the aid of British gunboats and ordnance, Denikin captured Tsaritsyn. It was there that he issued his "Moscow directive," ordering an offensive on the Soviet capital. The strike force, made up chiefly of officers, began an assault on the heart of the country. It seized Kursk and Orel and threatened Tula, the main arsenal of the Red Army. The capitalists of the Donets basin promised a million-rouble prize to whichever of Denikin's regiments was first to enter Moscow.

The temporary successes of Denikin's army were due mostly to British aid. It was decided at a special cabinet meeting held June 29, 1919 that assistance to Denikin should be continued.[68] "General Denikin's position is now one of great strength," Churchill said in a note to the War Cabinet on September 22. "General Denikin disposes of an army, which ... is rapidly growing and at the present time certainly amounts to over 300,000 fighting men."[69]

The hopes placed in Admiral Kolchak had come to naught; all eyes now turned towards Denikin. Churchill admitted as much in a telegram sent to Kolchak in Omsk on October 10. He wrote that the British government had recently decided to concentrate on aid to Denikin's front, which was less remote, in the belief that the United States would increase its assistance to the armies in Siberia.[70]

At Churchill's suggestion, a military mission of two thousand officers was sent to Denikin, along with 14,500,000 pounds sterling for buying arms and equipment. The USA also provided extensive aid. On August 1, arms, ammunition, and uniforms sufficient for an army of 100,000 were sent to Denikin through Bakhmetiev, who had been the tsar's ambassador to the United States.[71]

Just two days after Denikin captured Orel, Churchill wrote in a note to the cabinet (delivered October 15): "At the present time the military situation, taken as a whole, is such that it would be prudent to count upon the collapse and destruction of the Bolshevik power." He recommended that Britain "recognize the Government of Kolchak and Denikin as the Government of United Russia."[72]

"All Out for the Fight Against Denikin!"

In those terrible months of 1919, a mortal danger hung over the Soviet republic. "This is one of the most critical,

probably even the most critical moment for the socialist revolution," Lenin wrote in a letter to Bolshevik Party organizations "All Out for the Fight Against Denikin!" [73]

What made the situation especially dangerous was that the battle was fought in the very center of the country. There was an immediate threat to Tula, the arsenal of the Soviet republic, and to Moscow, its capital. The enemy captured the main bases producing food and raw materials. What was more, the Allies ordered Yudenich, whose army had recovered from defeat, to begin a new offensive on Petrograd so as to draw the forces of the Red Army away from Denikin's front. Yudenich had the support of British and Canadian troops, and of the British fleet in the Baltic. On October 16, he telegraphed to Denikin, "The North-Western army ... is approaching Petrograd." He expected to capture the city "in the next few days." [74] After taking Detskoye Selo, Yudenich ordered that a radiogram be sent announcing his entry into Petrograd. The Western European press was unanimous in predicting that the city would fall soon. *The Times* actually reported its capture on October 18.

The Bolshevik Party turned the country into a unified armed camp. At the end of October, the Red Army mounted an offensive and defeated the White Guards under Yudenich. At the same time, the Bolshevik Party mobilized the masses for the struggle against Denikin. During special recruitment weeks held in the summer and autumn, nearly 200,000 working people joined the party and were sent directly to the front.

The Bolshevik Party's Central Committee, at Lenin's suggestion, adopted a resolution for turning Soviet Russia into a unified armed camp. A plan of battle against Denikin was worked out, and the Red Army put it into action, overwhelmingly defeating the officers' divisions at Orel, Kromy, and Voronezh, and later at Kursk and Kharkov. Denikin's army was swiftly rolled back to the south. In the beginning of 1920, all of the Ukraine and the northern Caucasus were liberated from the White Guards. Novorossiisk, the last bastion of the Whites, was taken at the end of March. Denikin fled the country. The demoralized remnants of his forces were pressed to the sea not far from Sochi and surrendered.

James Louis Garvin wrote in the *Observer*: "All across South Russia Denikin has been smashed despite of his Brit-

ish materiel and equipment."[75] The Allies' second campaign, in which the imperialists had placed such great hopes, had come a cropper.

Despite the resistance of international imperialism, peace talks between Soviet Russia and Estonia reopened in Tartu (Yuriev) on December 15, 1919. The armistice signed on February 2 of 1920 marked a major victory for Soviet Russia in its struggle against international imperialism, an event of great political significance. In December of 1919, Lenin wrote of the Soviet government's historic triumph over the Allies: "In the first place we won over to our side the workers and peasants of the Entente countries; secondly, we gained the neutrality of the small nations under the Entente's domination."[76]

In addition to military intervention and diplomatic isolation, foreign reactionaries imposed a stringent economic blockade on the Soviet republic in an attempt to starve it into submission. By the beginning of 1920, however, the international position of the Soviet government had changed. The campaigns of Kolchak and Denikin had failed; Europe was plunged in economic chaos; revolutionary sentiment was growing in the West and East alike; and a movement for solidarity with Soviet Russia arose. All this forced the Allies to alter their tactics. For the time being, though, there was no fundamental revision of policy, which would have meant halting the intervention, establishing diplomatic relations, and engaging in extensive trade.

While they did not abandon their hopes for success in military intervention, Lloyd George and those around him decided to effect a degree of rapproachement with the Soviet republic and to establish trade. In January of 1920 the Allied Supreme Council, at the suggestion of Lloyd George, lifted the blockade on Soviet Russia. True, Lloyd George insisted that trade was being reopened with the "Russian people" rather than the Soviet government.[77] Nonetheless, the end of the blockade was a clear break in the net of political and economic isolation thrown over Soviet Russia. "We have," Lenin said, "already cut a window opening on to Europe, and we shall try to make wide use of it."[78] But having formally lifted their blockade, the imperialists began preparations for a new attack.

Preparations for the Attack by Bourgeois Poland and by Wrangel

In the spring of 1920, the Allies decided to throw their last reserve into the battle against Soviet Russia: Poland, then ruled by the landowners and bourgeoisie, and the White Guards under Wrangel. As early as January of that year, Lenin had warned the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet people that the bourgeoisie in the West was "inciting the Polish whiteguards against us. We must, therefore, be once more on our guard, prepare for new attacks. . ." [79]

The Allies were also hoping to involve reactionary forces in Germany, Austria, Romania, Finland, and Hungary, as well as the counterrevolutionary governments of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. This new anti-Soviet campaign was planned in conjunction with that of Denikin's army. Churchill, who did everything in his power to destroy Soviet Russia, wrote that "Poland must be regarded as the left wing of Denikin's army as against the Bolsheviks." [80]

Back in September of 1919, Lloyd George had declared, after talking with Polish Prime Minister Ignace Paderewski, at a meeting of the heads of delegations to the Paris Peace Conference, that Poland could raise an army of 500,000 to march on Moscow. Marshal Foch was instructed to draw up plans accordingly.

The *Daily Herald*, a Labour paper, reported on May 20, 1920, that in December of the previous year Churchill and Clemenceau had completed plans for a joint attack by Poland, Finland, and Romania. In January, 1920, a meeting of the Allied Supreme Council had resolved that these countries should be used in the battle against Soviet Russia. [81]

With help from England, France, and the USA, Pilsudski's government put together a well equipped army of 700,000. Lenin pointed out that "international capital, and in the first place French capital, was the chief force driving the Poles into a war with us." [82]

France alone, in the spring of 1920, supplied Poland with 560,000 rifles, about 3,000 machine guns and 2,000 cannon, 300 airplanes, and much more. French officers served as instructors for the Polish army. The British sent money and machines, and also a staff of officers. In January of 1920, a meeting of the heads of delegations to the Paris Peace Conference agreed to let Poland acquire 300,000

Mauser rifles, 8,000,000 cartridges, and 1,000,000 kilograms of powder from the defeated Germans. [83]

In the first half of 1920, the USA provided the Polish reactionaries with more than $100,000,000 worth of arms and equipment, including 200 tanks, 300 airplanes, 20,000 machine guns, and 3,000,000 complete uniforms. A special appointee was placed in charge of assistance to the Polish army; at his initiative, a special committee was set up to aid counterrevolutionaries in the western part of Russia.

Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists also joined the struggle against Soviet Russia. Simon Petlyura had fled to Poland after being driven out of the Soviet Ukraine. In April of 1920, he concluded an agreement with Pilsudski calling for joint action. Pilsudski then issued a declaration saying the Polish army would work together with the Ukrainian forces, and would remain in the Ukraine until the position was stabilized. [84] Petlyura, in turn, called on the Ukrainian people to "do all in their power to facilitate the operations of the Polish and Ukrainian forces." [85]

The Soviet government wanted to establish normal, friendly relations with Poland; in 1919 and 1920 it called repeatedly for peace. But the Polish government took no heed. On January 28, 1920, the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR warned that "Poland stands before a decision that could have the gravest consequences." Early in February, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee called once again for peace, urging the Polish people to "understand that the workers and peasants of Russia truly and deeply desire peace with Poland." [86] And again, as so many times before, Polish reactionaries claimed the Bolsheviks had rejected their peace proposals.

The Soviet government was well aware that Russian counterrevolutionary leaders—Chaikovsky, Sazonov, and Savinkov—had arrived in Warsaw to put together a new "Russian" army. [87] It accordingly declared on March 6, in yet another note to the Polish government, that "the people of Russia eagerly await the moment when they will be able to live in peace and friendship with the people of Poland." [88] The note expressed strong hopes that the Polish government would not delay in replying to Soviet peace proposals and would begin negotiations. But Soviet Russia's offer of peace was perceived as a sign of weakness by international reaction.

Pilsudski Mounts an Offensive

The Polish aggressors, encouraged and supported in every way by reactionaries in England, France, and the USA, began their attack on the morning of April 25, 1920, without having declared war. The imperialists were trying once again to crush Soviet Russia.

This time the main instigators were the French, who wanted to make Poland an outpost of imperialism in Eastern Europe. London's reaction to the new campaign was very restrained. "It is not possible to say yet what the outcome will be," Churchill wrote in a secret note to the cabinet on May 21.[89]

This campaign was, however, the imperialists' last hope; Poland therefore received significant aid in arms and equipment. What was more, by 1920 nine generals, twenty-nine colonels, as many as 700 other officers, and more than 2,000 instructors had been sent.[90] Special military missions from Britain, France, and the USA accompanied Polish troops.[91]

The Polish White Guards' advantage in numbers enabled them to capture Kiev on May 6. But international conditions were changing. Having defeated Denikin, the Red Army was able to transfer more troops to the Polish front. The blockade of Soviet Russia had been formally lifted. The Polish aggressors were unable to maintain their momentum.

The Allies were determined at all costs to break the resistance of the Red Army. Baron Wrangel, their protege, moved to the rescue from his stronghold in the Crimea on June 6. His troops captured northern Taurida and the southern Ukraine, threatening the rear of the Soviet forces.

But the Poles and Wrangel were not to enjoy success for long. The Red Army launched a counteroffensive. Kiev was liberated on June 12, and Minsk on July 11.

The Polish army was driven out of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. The Red Army's Southern front pushed as far as Lvov, liberating half of Galicia. In mid August, the Western front approached Warsaw. Pilsudski's troops were on the verge of utter calamity.

The defeat of the Polish reactionaries caused great consternation in the Allied camp. As Lenin pointed out, the war against Poland "proved to be a more direct war against the Entente.... However, in attacking Poland we are thereby attacking the Entente itself; by destroying the Polish army we are destroying the Peace of Versailles, on which the whole present system of international relations rests."[92]

Chapter 4

The Lost Illusions of Lloyd George

The political opponents of British Prime Minister Lloyd George, and even men of his own party, said of him: "He knows nothing, but understands everything." David George, who later added the surname of his uncle, Richard Lloyd, was the son of an impoverished Welsh schoolmaster. When David was just a year old, his father died; he was supported through childhood by his mother's brother, a village shoemaker.

The formal education of the future prime minister and European political figure was confined to a village elementary school. By working hard on his own, he managed to become a solicitor. In 1890 he was elected to Parliament, where he headed a group of Welsh Liberals demanding national autonomy.

The political "talents" of Lloyd George came into full bloom at the time of the First World War. He strongly opposed making peace through compromise with Germany and Austria-Hungary, and stood for "war till victory."

After the October Revolution, Lloyd George became an enemy of the young republic. Soviet Russia emerged triumphant from the civil war. The interventionists were driven out of the European part of the country, and the Red Army crushed the White generals and admirals supported by the Allies. The downfall of foreign intervention and domestic counterrevolution was also a defeat for international imperialism. The aggressive plans of Soviet Russia's enemies had been foiled.

The Soviet republic now entered into a time of peace, enabling it to build up its economy. The long breathing spell grew into an era of peaceful coexistence between states with different social and economic systems. Characterizing the international situation that took shape towards the end

of 1920, Lenin said: "We have something more than a breathing space: we have entered a new period, in which we have won the right to our fundamental international existence in the network of capitalist states." [1] A period of bloodless diplomatic and economic battles had begun.

The capitalist powers turned increasingly to economic intervention, attempting to interfere in the economic life of Soviet Russia. It was Lloyd George who inspired this program and provided the ideology for it. Lenin called him "a first-class bourgeois manipulator, an astute politician, a popular orator who will deliver any speeches you like, even r-r-revolutionary ones, ... Lloyd George serves the bourgeoisie splendidly, and serves it precisely *among* the workers, brings its influence precisely to the proletariat." [2]

Lloyd George had become a faithful servant of the Federation of British Industries and the bankers of the City, a defender of the capitalists' "sacred right" to property. Harry Pollitt, a true son of the British working class and one of the founders of the Communist Party of Great Britain, called him the greatest social demagogue of his time.

Lloyd George and those members of the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie who shared his views saw trade with Soviet Russia as nothing more than a small change in military tactics, or more precisely a combination of military and economic tactics. The struggle would now be waged both inside and outside while a more complex and fundamental assault on Soviet Russia was being prepared. "We have failed to restore Russia to sanity by force," Lloyd George was forced to admit in Parliament on February 10, 1920. "I believe we can save her by trade." [3]

Georgi Chicherin, who was then People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, gave a precise definition of this policy during an interview granted to the French newspaper *L'Humanite* on July 24, 1921: "The capitalist world's canniest politicians (I mean the English) have long since understood that they will never succeed in destroying us by force of arms. So now they are hoping to tame us, using trade." [4]

Military intervention had failed, and now the imperialists were hoping to resurrect capitalism in Russia with the help of commerce. But this was not the only reason for resuming trade; the industrialists and businessmen of Europe had compelling economic and political motives of their own.

In December of 1920, Lloyd George addressed members

of the Federation of British Industries, the owners and shareholders of Britain's most powerful monopolies: Vickers, Marconi, the Anglo-Iranian oil company, etc. He drew a gloomy picture of the state of Europe's economy. "Europe," he said, "... is impoverished ... Our customers are impoverished, bankrupt.... Europe is in rags and wants to buy. But its pockets are full of paper; it cannot buy."[5] Lloyd George believed that only by trading with Russia could England set its economic house in order.

In late 1920 and early 1921, the capitalist world was shaken by a severe economic crisis accompanied by widespread unemployment. In Europe alone there were ten million without jobs, and thirty million more working less than a full week. The crisis was especially grave for Britain, which had always depended on foreign markets. Thus it was world economic relations that forced the capitalists to normalize political and trade relations with Soviet Russia. "We need them, and they need us," Chicherin observed.[6] Britain was one of the first countries to open trade with the Soviet republic.

There were two schools of thought in Britain regarding the "Russian question." The commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, being more flexible regarding its class interests, favoured trade with Soviet Russia (not necessarily to the exclusion of armed struggle and economic intervention). Many industrialists, bankers, and businessmen in Britain, France, Belgium, and other countries had invested large amounts of capital in Central and Eastern Europe and particularly in Russia; they were hoping to recoup their losses. Moreover, the tsarist government had been indebted to a number of banks in Britain (including the Midland and London banks) and France. The bankers now wanted to encumber Soviet Russia with economic fetters.

The landed aristocracy and the imperialist colonial bourgeoisie belonged to the second, or military-reactionary school of thought. They wanted to continue the armed fight against Soviet Russia and opposed normalizing political and economic relations and opening trade. This line was closely associated with the old Russia of the tsars. Those who adhered to it believed military methods had not been exhausted. To be sure, the two schools were not antagonistic, being mainly a reflection of different economic interests.

It might seem that after the decisive victory of the Soviet republic, Britain and other countries would have extended

de jure recognition and put economic relations on a firm footing by signing trade agreements. But Lloyd George and his followers balked at such a radical about-face. The West European bourgeoisie, hoping capitalism might be restored, extended only half-hearted, *de facto* recognition.

As for the Soviet government, it set about using conflicts of interest among the capitalists to consolidate its position and establish economic and political relations with Europe and America. The imperialist and civil wars, intervention, and blockades had almost completely wrecked the economy of Soviet Russia. On May 18, 1920, Churchill informed the cabinet in a special memorandum that Russia was facing chaos: industry had been crippled, factories were closed, communications had broken down, and skilled workers had left the cities.[7]

At this time the economic battle, rebuilding what had been destroyed, was of paramount importance to the Communist Party and the Soviet people. On November 23, 1920, the Soviet government published a decree on concessions, which pointed out that the world's economy, including that of Russia, could be rebuilt much more quickly if the republic received capital from abroad. The granting of concessions split the imperialist camp and weakened the position of those calling for new military actions.

When War Communism gave way to the New Economic Policy (NEP) there was a renewal of hope in the capitalist world. The bourgeois press and many Western politicians concluded that NEP meant the Soviet system had failed. The *Observer* reported on May 8, 1921, that the communist phase of the revolution was over and the rebirth of capitalism in Russia was inevitable. Lloyd George, addressing the House of Commons, spoke of the "complete failure of the Communist system."[8] Earlier he had said, "You cannot patch up locomotives with Karl Marx's doctrines."[9] But the prime minister's jubilation was premature. The New Economic Policy was a temporary, tactical withdrawal in preparation for a new attack on the private sector. It was a policy adopted under the dictatorship of the proletariat in order to overcome capitalist elements and help build socialism.

The Beginning of Trade Negotiations

The Anglo-Soviet negotiations of 1920-1921, which concluded in the signing of a trade agreement on March 16,

1921, marked an important phase in the Soviet government's struggle for peace and favourable conditions for building socialism. The resolutions of the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), which met in March 1921, contained an exact description of the capitalist countries' motives in opening trade with the Soviet republic: "The failure of intervention and the desire of capitalist groups competing in the world arena to enlarge their profits by exploiting the natural wealth of Russia is forcing a number of capitalist states to move towards concluding agreements with the Soviet republic." [10]

The shocks of the world economic crisis were awakening capitalists to Soviet Russia's importance not only as a rich source of natural raw materials but also as a consumer of industrial products. Economic relations with Russia were especially important for the British industry, which could not survive without foreign markets. What was more, Britain needed Russian raw materials. These resulted in the capitalists' signing a half-commercial, half-political agreement with Soviet Russia.

Anglo-Soviet negotiations began late in May of 1920, with the arrival in London of a Soviet delegation headed by Leonid Krasin. The workers of the city gave them a joyous welcome. The talks, while nominally confined to trade, were in fact political from the outset.

In its first month in England, the Soviet delegation tried to conduct talks along two lines: with the standing committee of the Allied Supreme Economic Council, and with the British government. Owing to French hostility, the former set of talks never got off the ground.

Lenin was well aware of the conflicts among imperialists and the disagreements on the "Russian question" that existed within the ruling echelons of capitalist countries, and especially Britain. He accordingly directed the delegation to concentrate on the talks with the British. The Soviet government wanted peace with Britain, normal diplomatic relations, and extensive trade. Establishing diplomatic relations with a power of such importance would split the capitalist countries' united front, and trade with Britain would help speed the recovery of the Soviet economy. The Communist Party, the Soviet government, and Lenin himself placed great importance on concluding a trade agreement, and the Central Committee discussed this question on several occasions.

Krasin's first meeting with Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Curzon, and Robert Horne (President of the Board of Trade) took place on May 31 at three in the afternoon. Lloyd George asked what stood in the way of trade between the two countries. Evidently he had forgotten that his government was encouraging Wrangel and the Polish landowners and bourgeoisie to attack Soviet Russia.

"The most important question before us," Krasin answered with dignity, "is whether there shall be peace between our two governments, or war." [11]

As the first meeting showed, Lloyd George hoped to throw Krasin off his guard with sham negotiations, to sound out the Soviet delegation while giving nothing in return. Meanwhile he could paralyze independent Soviet foreign policy in the Orient and continue British aid to Wrangel and the Polish bourgeoisie and landowners. [12]

In a telegram to Krasin, Chicherin called what Lloyd George was doing "double-dealing of the lowest sort". Lenin wrote in a note to Chicherin: "...that scoundrel Lloyd George is fooling you in the most vile and shameless manner, don't believe a word...." [13]

From the very beginning of the talks, the British government violated the principles of equality and mutual noninterference in internal affairs. At his meeting with Krasin on June 18, Lloyd George made it clear that the main question would be Soviet recognition of Russia's pre-war debts.

The reasons for this were obvious. Lloyd George was acting at the orders of his true masters, in particular Montagu Norman (then director of the Bank of England) and other financial magnates. These men had always insisted that the prime condition for *de facto* recognition of Soviet Russia must be its recognition of debts incurred by the tsarist and provisional governments and compensation for the property of British subjects that had been nationalized.[14]

Moreover, the Board of Trade warned British industrialists and businessmen against trading with Soviet Russia until an official agreement had been signed. Those who ignored the ban, Horne cautioned, would do so at their own risk. [15]

Krasin countered by demanding the Allied governments recognize the claims of Russia's private citizens arising from the intervention and make amends for the Russian soldiers their grenades and bullets had killed. The blood of Russian soldiers was far more precious than British gold.

The first few meetings produced nothing whatever; the two sides were completely at odds on the question of debts. Furthermore, a note sent to Krasin on June 30, 1920, demanded that the Soviet government refrain from direct or indirect propaganda in the countries of the Orient. Curzon, in a report to the cabinet, pictured this note as an ultimatum. (Incidentally, it is also clear from Curzon's report that British intelligence was opening Chicherin's correspondence with Krasin and had decoded his instructions.) [16]

The Soviet government, sincerely desiring peace and the normalization of relations, accepted the principles set forth in the note to Krasin as a basis for agreement between Russia and Great Britain, as an armistice opening the way to a lasting peace. [17]

Ignoring the promise both parties had made not to participate in hostile actions against one other, Britain continued to give military and diplomatic support to the Polish government and Wrangel. It threatened war and mobilized its Baltic fleet. The working people of Britain, however, actively resisted the policies of their government and the other enemies of Soviet Russia.

Ultimatums and Threats from the British Government

Five months had passed since Britain and Soviet Russia began talks on resuming trade and restoring normal diplomatic relations, and through the fault of British politicians not a single positive step had been made. On November 9, the Soviet government pointed out in a special note that despite the good will and openness it had displayed, clear evidence of its "sincere desire for peace and peaceful work", the progress of the talks had been "highly unsatisfactory." [18]

The British government's notes, which issued from the poisonous pen of Foreign Secretary Curzon, read like ultimatums rather than normal diplomatic correspondence between two sovereign states. Talks on economic questions had been stalled by bringing in a whole range of unrelated political matters: the exchange of prisoners of war, political propaganda, the Polish question, and so on.

The Soviet government expressed hope that as soon as the trade talks were successfully concluded, or while they were still in progress, negotiations aimed at making a peace agreement and normalizing relations could be conducted. [19]

It was ready to send a delegation to Britain or any other country for this purpose.

Flying in the face of the facts, the British government blamed Soviet Russia for the delays. On November 14, 1920, in a special secret memorandum to the cabinet, Curzon outlined the more than five months' history of the talks. He could not deny that the Soviet government placed enormous importance on concluding a trade agreement, or that it had shown good will and a desire to normalize relations.

Nonetheless, continuing to ignore Britain's interests and the needs of its people, Curzon insisted: "We should not be able to trade with people whose policy is to undermine our authority in every part of the world." [20] There was no need, he argued, to enter into relations with "a State which makes no secret of its intentions to overthrow our institutions everywhere and destroy our prestige and authority, particularly in Asia." [21] As an enemy of liberation movements and the working people's struggle for national independence, Curzon feared that the revolutionary example of the Soviet republic would undermine the colonial policies of British imperialism. As for the Soviet offer to send a delegation to discuss political conditions, Curzon maintained that the moment had not yet come. [22]

The Anglo-Soviet talks resumed after the collapse of Pilsudski's and Wrangel's armies. On the November day when news of the latter's defeat reached London, the cabinet assembled at once. The Conservative press reported that most of the ministers now favoured a trade agreement. It was decided to send a draft agreement to the Soviet government. On November 18, Lloyd George told the House of Commons that the cabinet had drawn the outlines of an agreement with Russia; a number of details remained to be settled. [23] The hopes of the military-reactionary clique, which wanted to crush the Soviet republic with armed strength, had come to naught. The talks resumed, and at the end of November a draft agreement was handed to Krasin.

It might have seemed that a trade agreement would soon be concluded. But British politicians began another endless round of discussions, this time centered on the preamble to the draft agreement. The British government had not indicated that political negotiations were to follow, or guaranteed the former Russian government's property in Britain against confiscation.

Krasin met with Lloyd George and Bonar Law in late

December, but to no avail. Moreover, pressure was once again applied to the Soviet delegation: Horne declared in the House of Commons that Russia was to blame for the delay in concluding a trade agreement. This was blatantly false, and the Soviet government protested vigorously.[24]

At the end of December, reporting to the Eighth Congress of Soviets on the work of the Council of People's Commissars, Lenin said: "We are prepared to sign a trade agreement at once; if it has not yet been signed, the blame rests wholly with those trends and tendencies in British ruling circles that are anxious to frustrate the trade agreement and ... want a free hand to attack Soviet Russia again." The imperialists, he foretold, would be forced to accept "a full agreement, not merely a semi-agreement."[25] History, as it has done so often, bore out Lenin's prediction in full.

The Position of the Soviet Government

The Soviet government's correspondence with the British government in January and February of 1921, and in particular the note dated February 4, demonstrated its willingness to conclude an agreement despite Britain's unfriendly moves. Britain had tried to organize rebellions in the outlying Soviet republics; British and French warships in the Black Sea had attacked the ships of Soviet Russia and other nations; Britain had tried to keep Soviet Russia from establishing friendly relations with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan; the Allies had aided Wrangel and the Polish landowners and bourgeoisie—and still the Soviet government was willing to establish trade and diplomatic relations with Britain.[26] It was even willing to make concessions. But it refused to compromise its sovereignty in any way. Proof of this is the firm and consistent line taken by Soviet diplomats, the party Central Committee, and Lenin himself.

The draft of an Anglo-Soviet agreement was discussed repeatedly in the Central Committee and finally approved at a plenary session.[27] On March 4, Krasin brought forward the Soviet draft agreement; negotiations were renewed. But once again the signing was delayed.

In his report to the Eighth Congress of Soviets, Lenin said: "This delicate problem had recently to be very thoroughly discussed by the Central Committee of the Party ... and our policy in this matter has been marked by

the greatest degree of accommodation. Our aim now is to obtain a trade agreement with Britain so as to start more regular trade and be able to buy as soon as possible the machinery necessary for our extensive plan to rehabilitate the national economy. The sooner we do this, the greater will be the basis ensuring our economic independence of the capitalist countries." [28] To restore the economy, to consolidate the strength of Soviet Russia—these were the main goals. The changes Lenin suggested in the preamble of the draft agreement and in articles 2, 5 and 14 made it significantly more advantageous to the Soviet republic.

The Campaign of the "World Press Syndicate"

Shortly before the agreement was to be signed, the struggle between opponents and supporters of trade and diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia took on a new ferocity. Financiers, the imperial bourgeoisie, the landed aristocracy, and their henchmen Churchill and Curzon led a frenzied attack on the agreement. Industrialists who had lost capital and property in Soviet Russia followed their lead. (Leslie Urquhart, former chairman of the Russian Asiatic Consolidated Company and owner of mines in Kyshtym and Tanalyk, belonged to this group). The onslaughts of monopoly capital were echoed in the Conservative press, particularly *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. These newspapers published fabrications about events in Soviet Russia. The Western press, especially in England, carried all this and more. The poets of the lie, as Chicherin called them, [29] were boundlessly imaginative.

In February and March of 1921, a counterrevolutionary rebellion, organized by SRs and Mensheviks, broke out in Kronstadt. Foreign imperialists were certain their hour had come; Kronstadt could be turned into a bridgehead for renewed intervention against Soviet Russia. But on the morning of March 18, Red Army troops and 300 delegates from the Tenth Party Congress broke through fortifications that had been considered impregnable and cleared the city of rebel forces.

This whole fantastic campaign of lies and provocations, and the sallies of the foreign secretary, were aimed primarily at preventing the signing of a trade agreement. "The world press syndicate," Lenin said, "has launched a world-wide campaign on behalf of the imperialists with the prime ob-

ject of disrupting the negotiations for a trade agreement with Britain which Krasin has initiated, and the forthcoming trade agreement with America.... And the Kronstadt events revealed their connection with the international bourgeoisie." [30]

The Kronstadt rebellion was a disappointment to reactionary politicians in London, Paris, and Washington. The minutes of a cabinet meeting held March 14 record regretfully that despite recent events in Russia (i.e., the Kronstadt rebellion) the position of the Soviet government appeared to be firm and stable. [31]

The imperialists' worldwide campaign was meant to preserve the unity of the anti-Soviet front, which an agreement between Britain and Soviet Russia destroyed. In effect, the agreement gave recognition to Soviet laws annulling foreign debts and nationalizing the property of foreigners. The signing of a trade agreement had become an international question, involving the interests of capitalists in France, the USA, Belgium, Italy, and other countries, especially those who had formerly owned properties in Russia or held Russian securities.

A Half-Commercial, Half-Political Agreement

The struggle between those who favoured the agreement and those who opposed it intensified as the time for the signing approached. There were special debates in Parliament on Anglo-Soviet trade and recognition of the Soviet government. Members of the military-reactionary clique, including Samuel, Raper, and Lambert Ward, were in violent opposition. [32] A second group, made up of Liberals and Labourites, represented the interests of industrialists and businessmen. They supported the agreement, believing trade with Soviet Russia would help to alleviate the economic crisis that gripped Britain. They were also thinking of economic intervention, and hoping the debts of the tsarist and provisional governments would eventually be made good.

Kenworthy, a Liberal and pacifist, spoke of the need to break the deadlock in trade and finance that plagued many of Britain's commercial enterprises. "Sooner or later there will be great riches available in Russia," he said, "and it will be a great market for our goods. Every month we delay the longer we cut ourselves off from that market." [33]

The working people of Britain, local organizations of the Labour party, trade unions, and the Communist Party of Great Britain exerted considerable pressure in favour of the agreement. Moreover, Lloyd George could not afford to ignore reports that other countries, in particular Sweden and Germany, might get in ahead of Britain. Kenworthy and Richardson told Parliament that Sweden had promised to deliver 10,000 harvesting machines to the Russians, and that Hugo Stinnes, the German industrialist, was negotiating for a concession that would allow him to build a factory in Bryansk producing 8,000 locomotives and 80,000 railroad cars annually.

The agreement was finally concluded, in the version approved by Moscow, on March 16, 1921. Robert Horne signed for Britain, Leonid Krasin for Soviet Russia.[34] It was a half-commercial and half-political document, effective until a general peace treaty had been concluded between Britain and Soviet Russia. It went far beyond trade, dealing with such political matters as the establishment of diplomatic relations. Both sides promised to refrain from undertaking hostile actions against each other and from conducting propaganda abroad against the other's institutions.

One of the agreement's most significant provisions was the article providing for an exchange of official agents. In effect, Britain was extending diplomatic recognition to Soviet Russia. The functions prescribed for the agents made them diplomats in all but name. They were to enjoy diplomatic immunity. They were also entitled to communicate freely with their government by post, telegraph, and radio, to use coded messages, and to dispatch and receive diplomatic couriers carrying secret correspondence.[35] The agreement exempted trade agents from state and local taxes, a privilege extended only to official diplomatic representatives.

The Soviet government promised to lay no claim to the property or capital of members of former Russian governments residing in the United Kingdom. It made a similar promise regarding the British government's property and capital in Russia. Goods imported into either country under the agreement were not to be requisitioned.[36]

The agreement provoked controversy in Britain and around the world. There was discussion in Parliament on the day of the signing, and again on March 22. Lloyd George announced that the agreement meant *de facto* recognition of the Soviet government. "Were we to wait ... until the

Socialist Government had vanished, or the Bolshevik Government had vanished [in Russia—*F. V.*]?" he asked. "Is there one man who would take the responsibility of saying how long it will last? I am not going to say." [37] But Lloyd George and his followers, while admitting the strength of the Soviet order, had not lost hope of destroying it with any means that came to hand. They attacked fiercely the government monopoly on foreign trade, the iron shield protecting the Soviet economy from intervention by capitalist states.

Thus Britain refused to recognize Soviet Russia *de jure* and establish full diplomatic relations. Later, Lloyd George said such delays were meant to test the firmness of the Soviet government and wrest from it as many concessions as possible.

The Soviet government regarded the agreement with Britain as a turning point. Britain was admitting that military intervention and diplomatic isolation had failed as weapons against the Soviet republic. Lenin's principle of peaceful coexistence among states with different social systems had become a reality. As Chicherin said, a new page had opened in the history of Anglo-Soviet relations. [38]

Lenin saw the signing of the agreement as an event of "world-wide significance." [39] It opened a window on Europe, the "breach in the wall of world capitalism," as Lenin called it. [40]

A Soviet-Turkish treaty was signed the same day (March 16). The Agreement with Britain was another step towards establishing diplomatic relations with the capitalist world, towards recognition by capitalist states of the balance of forces that had resulted from the military and diplomatic victories of the young Soviet republic.

Chapter 5

Genoa: A Major Attempt at Economic Intervention

Twenty-one capitalist countries, whose rulers wanted to put the Soviet people in bondage under the pretense of "aiding" famine victims, met at the Brussels Conference in October of 1921. The Soviet government's reply to the decisions made there brilliantly exemplifies the moral superiority of Soviet diplomacy. The capitalist powers had insisted that the debts of the tsarist government must be acknowledged before aid was given to famine victims in Russia. In a reply sent to the USA, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan on October 28, the Soviet government declared it was firmly convinced that "no people is bound to pay the cost of the chains which it has worn for centuries." [1]

At the same time the Soviet government, wishing to achieve full agreement with other powers, was willing to compromise on a number of important points, particularly regarding the many small holders of Russian government bonds, especially in France. The essential condition for such an agreement would be the cessation of all actions threatening the security of the Soviet republics. In other words, such repayments could be undertaken only if the great powers agreed to conclude a final and general peace treaty with Soviet Russia and recognize its government. The Soviet government also suggested that an international conference be called immediately to consider these questions and draw up a final peace treaty. [2]

Lenin, as leader of the country and director of its diplomacy, was directly involved in the writing of this programmatic note. In his remarks on the draft, he gave special importance to the advancement of counterclaims against the imperialist governments. The Soviet people had suffered much from the intervention and its attendant bloodshed. Lenin wanted to be sure that talks with capitalist countries would be conducted on a basis of equality.

In Soviet view, one of the chief conditions for restoring peace and mutual trust was ending the systematic exclusion of Soviet Russia from international conferences on questions that involved its interests, and attempts to force it to comply with decisions it had no hand in making. There was no way to restore the world's economy, rebuild what had been destroyed, and achieve complete peace without Soviet Russia and its population of 130,000,000. The economic rebuilding of Russia was a necessity of the first importance in the long-term interests and needs of all governments and peoples.[3]

The proposed international conference coincided with the plans of Britain's prime minister. Lloyd George was hoping to bring his country out of its economic crisis at the expense of Soviet Russia. He built his program for the Parliamentary elections on the idea of an international conference. He also intended to secure victory for Britain in its struggle with America for world domination and with France for hegemony in Europe. Thus the conference was seen as a means of resolving conflicts among the imperialists and of overcoming the world economic crisis at Soviet Russia's expense. Once again, the imperialists were trying to force Soviet Russia to capitulate by applying economic pressure.

The Allied Supreme Council was to convene in Cannes in January. On December 19, 1921, Lloyd George and Briand met in London to discuss its agenda, including the "Russian question." Between December 30 and January 1, British, French, Japanese, Belgian, and Italian bankers and businessmen met in Paris to work out a detailed agenda.[4] Those who had once owned property in Russia, or held loans, also met to draw up a program.

On January 6, 1922, the meeting of the Allied Supreme Council opened in Cannes, not far from Nice, beside the azure Mediterranean. The prime ministers of Britain (Lloyd George), France (Briand), Italy (Bonomi), and Belgium (Theunis) were all present. The USA was represented by an observer, Colonel Harvey.

In his opening speech, Lloyd George said it would be impossible to rebuild Western Europe without trade with Russia. At the same time he demanded that all of the tsarist government's debts be recognized and that all individuals be compensated for losses and damages suffered under confiscation.[5] In this he was supported by Briand. It was only after these conditions were met, they declared, that the Soviet

government could be recognized. This position was expressed in a resolution adopted at Cannes: "An Economic and Financial Conference should be summoned in February or early March to which all the Powers of Europe, including Germany, Russia, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria, should be invited to send representatives." [6]

The resolution went on to enumerate the main conditions for the success of this conference. The first point stated: "Nations can claim no right to dictate to each other regarding the principles on which they are to regulate their system of ownership, internal economy and government. It is for every nation to choose for itself the system which it prefers in this respect." [7] The second point demanded guarantees that foreign capital and property would be respected. The third set out in great detail the requirements (clearly to be imposed on Soviet Russia) that all public debts and obligations of former governments be recognized and that all losses and damages suffered by foreign interests through confiscation or withholding of their property be restored or compensated.

The fourth point called for organizing financial and currency exchange to provide security for trade. The fifth demanded that no hostile propaganda be conducted against their governments. The sixth enjoined all countries to refrain from aggression against their neighbours. [8]

Lloyd George was a dilettante at diplomacy, and his French was shaky. During the discussion of where the conference should be held, an Italian delegate called out from his place "Genoa!" Lloyd George agreed, thinking Geneva had been suggested. [9] (The two names sound much alike in French.) When Lloyd George discovered his mistake, he refused to admit it. And thus the conference was held in Italy, rather than Switzerland.

It was also decided that a small committee should take charge of the arrangements for Genoa. Italy offered to allocate 12,000,000 lire for the conference and make a royal palace available as well as comfortable accommodations and hotels for members of delegations and journalists. Of course it would be more difficult to maintain contact with Moscow from Genoa than from London, Paris, or Stockholm. But the Soviet suggestion that the conference be held in London was ignored.

The calling of the Genoa Conference was not only evidence of the enormous political and economic difficulties the

capitalist world faced in attempting to resolve its post-war conflicts. Capitalist politicians were being forced to admit that the Versailles system, which Soviet Russia had no part in creating, could not guarantee either lasting peace or economic stability in Europe.

Military intervention and blockade had failed, and now the interrelations of world economics left the capitalists no choice but to undertake economic and political cooperation with Soviet Russia. "Without Russian raw materials and without the Russian market," Chicherin pointed out, "the economy of the whole world suffers. It is undoubtedly essential to the interests of the world economy to rebuild and develop the economy of Russia." [10] The decisions made at Cannes were an admission that the capitalists' attempts to destroy Soviet Russia militarily had failed. Furthermore, the Western powers had for the first time recognized the new balance of world forces and admitted that states with different social systems could coexist in peace.

On the evening of January 7, the Italian government, acting for the Allied Supreme Council, sent a memorandum to Moscow inviting Soviet Russia, and Lenin personally, to participate in the Genoa Conference. [11] The Soviet government accepted the invitation the next day. A special session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the reply said, would decide the makeup of the delegation and confer broad powers on it. These would be the same whether Lenin, whose workload had grown still heavier because of the famine, was able to attend or not. [12]

The capitalist world, by inviting Lenin to Genoa, had acknowledged him as an outstanding leader not only in Soviet internal politics but also in world affairs. His name was renowned among working people all over the world.

The reactionary bourgeois press, however, was outraged. The mouthpiece of the City, *The Times*, poured sarcasm on Lloyd George: "We seem to recollect—or is our memory at fault?—that not so very long ago the Royal and other Governments—and not they alone—considered that Lenin's chief speciality was not so much the restoration of capitalist equilibrium as its destruction." [13] Still, there was no ignoring the immense international authority Lenin exercised. Bourgeois newspapers in all countries carried headlines such as "Lenin invited to Genoa," "Lenin insists on London," "Russia can't spare Lenin," "Genoa without Lenin," and so on.

The *Daily Herald* wrote that "Lloyd George, representing the Capitalism of the West," wanted to cross swords in Genoa with "Lenin, representing the Communism of the East," [14] and present him with the demands of British creditors.

In later years Chicherin recalled: "Although Vladimir Ilyich lived in the country [because of his illness—*F. V.*] for a long time during the winter of 1921-22, he took a close and lively interest in matters connected with the Genoa Conference. He wrote a whole series of memoranda, on which the general content of our remarks in Genoa was based. It was his idea that a settlement regarding debts should be tied to the extension of credit to us." [15] It was Lenin's day-to-day guidance that brought Soviet diplomacy one new victory after another in the world arena.

Will Russia Submit to a Capitalist Canossa?

It was decided at a meeting of the Allied Supreme Council on January 13, 1922, that the Genoa Conference should open on March 8. The following program was adopted: to consider the realization of the Cannes resolution and to conclude a European peace. A number of economic, financial and other problems would also be discussed. [16]

On January 12, while planning for the Genoa Conference and the debates at Cannes were still going on, the Briand government fell. (It had, by the way, been accused of being soft on the "Russian question" and German reparations.) The new prime minister of France was Raymond Poincaré, an extreme reactionary who represented the magnates of heavy industry and in particular the Comité de Forges, one of the most powerful monopolistic groupings.

Poincaré was the exact opposite of Briand. He was known to all as Poincaré-la-Guerre, having been one of the main culprits in setting off the First World War. The monopolists of France valued him for the wolflike ferocity and persistence with which this cold, cunning, and cruel politician defended their interests. The wheelers and dealers on the Comité de Forges knew they could trust him.

The Allied Supreme Council had asked the Italian government to send out invitations to Genoa, and this was promptly done. But Poincaré managed to get the conference put off till April 10. Early in February, he sent the

British a note demanding that Soviet Russia not be permitted to take part in the Genoa Conference unless it first accepted a system of capitulations and acknowledged the debts of former governments. He also called for preserving the Versailles system of treaties and making no concessions to Germany while discussing reparations.[17] This was a reversal of the Cannes resolutions, a return to the method of ultimatums and threats.

At a meeting in Boulogne on February 25, however, Poincaré and Lloyd George agreed that inviting Soviet Russia to the conference did not amount to recognition. Recognition would depend on whether or not Soviet Russia accepted the draconian conditions the British and French imperialists were planning to dictate at Genoa.

Poincaré went even further. In a memo to the British government, he wrote with undisguised cynicism that Russia should be forced to set up an entirely new economic system, or rather restore the old one. But Soviet Russia had no intention of submitting to a capitalist Canossa. The Genoa conference was doomed to failure by the adoption of a policy of diktat, of demanding one-sided concessions: Soviet Russia must pay debts and return the nationalized property of foreigners, but would receive no guarantee that its government would be legally recognized, its counterclaims considered, or the credits it was asking for granted.

As the opening date approached, Poincaré mounted a large-scale effort to create a united anti-Soviet front at the conference. This was to include Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Finland, and also the countries of the Little Entente, which were under French influence. Poincaré's task was made easier by the fall of the Polish, Austrian, and Greek governments subsequent to the fall of Briand's cabinet in France. In Italy, Bonomi's government stepped down in favour of Facta's.

Just a week before the conference was to open, Parliament held special discussions of the "Russian question," in particular the establishment of diplomatic relations. Lloyd George raised the question of confidence. In the course of the discussion he was attacked by the Conservatives and also by some Labourites and Liberals.

The "hardhead" Conservatives, led by Churchill and Curzon, condemned the Genoa Conference out of hand and opposed any negotiations. The "Russian question," they insisted, should be resolved by armed force alone. The right

wing of the Labour party, while approving of the conference, demanded that Lloyd George take a tough stance towards the Soviets. One Labour leader, Philip Snowden, was altogether opposed to the conference.

During the discussion, Lloyd George raised the question of making the establishment of diplomatic relations dependent on the repayment of debts and the return of nationalized property by Soviet Russia. He proposed putting Soviet Russia through a "probation period" before granting full ceremonial diplomatic representation.[18] It was only thus that Lloyd George managed not only to stay in power but also to attend the Genoa conference.

In February Russia's creditors held a special conference in Paris. Twelve countries were represented, including the USA, Britain, Belgium, Japan, and Denmark. Noulens acted as chairman. The creditors demanded that in Genoa Soviet Russia be made to acknowledge all its debts and return the nationalized property of foreigners, and that the conditions laid down in Cannes be accepted as a preliminary platform for negotiations. If the Soviet government would not comply with these demands, they warned, it would not be recognized. At a conference of experts held in London between March 20 and 28, a program was worked out for restoring the capitalist order in Russia and turning it into a colony of the West European imperialists.[19]

Russian bankers, industrialists, landowners and merchants dispossessed by the revolution also dreamed of restoring the old order. They held a conference of their own in Paris, where P. P. Ryabushinsky gave voice to the hopes they treasured: "We look back from here at our factories. They are waiting for us, calling to us. We, their former owners, will return to them."[20] Such hopes were to go unrealized.

Soviet Russia Welcomes the Genoa Conference

Detailed instructions for Soviet diplomats going to Genoa were drawn up by the Central Committee of the Party under Lenin's guidance. It was Lenin who drafted the Central Committee decision defining the position the delegation was to take.

Above all, the delegation should try to avoid the question of accepting the Cannes conditions, which were generally harsh and particularly so regarding debts. If this proved

impossible, and the Soviet diplomats were confronted with an ultimatum, they should suggest Krasin's formula: "All countries recognise their state debts and undertake to compensate damage and losses caused by the acts of their governments." [21] If some way of covering private debts with Soviet counterclaims could not be arrived at, Lenin recommended a walkout. The breakdown of the talks would then be blamed primarily on the greed of a handful of private creditors backed by their governments. The Soviet delegation "should, without concealing our communist views, confine ourselves to ... a forthright statement ... that ... we have come for trade agreements and for an attempt to reach an agreement with the pacifist section of the other (bourgeois) camp." [22]

Lenin also recommended that everything possible be done "to strengthen the pacifist wing of the bourgeoisie." He particularly stressed that an important political task of the delegation would be "to disunite the bourgeois countries that will be united against us at Genoa." [23]

Lenin thus insisted on sticking to principles, on adamantly resisting the claims of those who aimed to shackle the Soviet republic. At the same time, he wanted the delegation to be flexible, to seek evenhanded and mutually beneficial agreements, both commercial and political, with capitalist countries.

Lenin made his first public pronouncement on the Genoa conference on March 6, at a meeting of Communists attending the All-Russia Congress of Metal Workers: "From the very beginning we declared that *we welcomed Genoa and would attend it,*" he said. "We understood perfectly well and did not in the least conceal the fact that we were going there as merchants, because trade with capitalist countries (as long as they have not entirely collapsed) is absolutely essential to us." [24]

The Soviet government aimed to split the capitalists' united front by exploiting conflicts within their camp. But Lenin was not labouring under any illusions; he thought it quite probable that the conference would be a failure. Whatever happened in Genoa, he insisted, the Soviet government would eventually succeed in broadening its trade with capitalist countries. "Through Genoa, if the other parties in the negotiations are sufficiently shrewd and not too stubborn; bypassing Genoa if they take it into their heads to be stubborn. But we shall achieve our goal!" [25]

Lenin was hoping to tell Lloyd George about all this in person in Genoa. Chicherin expressed the same outlook in an interview with *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* correspondents not long before the conference. In Genoa, he said, the Soviet delegation would "defend categorically the inviolability of the Soviet system, the sovereign rights of the Russian state, and those economic foundations of Soviet power which cannot be compromised without endangering the existence of the Soviet system and enslaving the working masses in Russia."[26] Soviet Russia would not tolerate the slightest diminution or violation of its sovereign rights.

During this period, as Lenin particularly stressed, the Soviet government was bringing to a halt its economic retreat under the New Economic Policy (NEP). No further concessions were being made to capitalist countries. The longer the capitalists put off recognizing the Soviet government and establishing regular trade relations, the less would be their chances of working out a compromise on the payment of debts. As Lenin put it: "The capitalist gentlemen think that they can dally, and the longer they dally the more concessions they will get, but we must say, *'Enough! Tomorrow you will get nothing!'* If they have not learned anything from the history of Soviet power and its victories, they can do as they please."[27]

Aggressive factions among the capitalists nonetheless failed to see the point. They had not learned; they were stubborn, not shrewd. And so the development of economic and political relations between Soviet Russia and the capitalist countries bypassed Genoa.

Preparations for the Battle at Genoa

On January 27, 1922, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee held a special session. Mikhail Kalinin, presiding, declared that "the agenda of the Genoa Conference... also includes the question of concluding a general peace, and thus we are justified in calling it a general peace conference."[28] In his report on the invitation of Soviet representatives, Chicherin made especial note of the role of British diplomacy, its devious cunning, and Lloyd George's attitude towards Soviet Russia. "The art of government has been brought to its most subtle flower on the banks of the Thames," he said. "The British tradition of governing consists in preserving historical continuity, in dealing with

new historical phenomena through compromise. The British art of government triumphs when it enters into an agreement with a new historical force so as to render it harmless."[29] The session confirmed the makeup of the Genoa delegation: it was to be headed by Lenin, with Chicherin as his deputy.

In preparation for the conference, the Soviet government worked at putting together a diplomatic union of Soviet republics to face the united front of the capitalist powers in Genoa. This would make it impossible for the Whiteguard governments of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the Ukraine, all of which had been ousted by the people, to insinuate themselves at the conference. The Russian Republic was empowered to sign pacts and agreements with the countries represented at Genoa, and with other powers, in the name of all the republics.[30]

As the opening day of the conference approached, the Soviet government had for two years been engaged in the enormous task of counting up the damage caused by foreign intervention, the land and sea blockades, support for domestic counterrevolution, and foreign powers' participation—direct and indirect—in the civil war. Counterclaims against the Western powers were to be made on this basis. Even an incomplete reckoning (losses of cattle, reduction of harvests, and so on could not be taken into consideration) showed that the Russian economy had suffered more than 39 billion gold roubles in damages.[31] By the very loose and exaggerated estimates of bourgeois economists, the total of Russia's pre-war and wartime debts came to only 18.5 billion roubles.

The news that Lenin had been personally invited to Genoa and intended to meet Lloyd George face to face caused great concern among the people all over Soviet Russia. Workers, peasants, office employees, and Red Army soldiers met to adopt resolutions and addressed an endless stream of letters to the Central Committee, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the Council of People's Commissars, and the editors of *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*. They feared for the life and safety of their beloved leader. The first Soviet diplomats, Kolomiytsev and Babushkin, had been murdered by enemies in Iran, and there was no absolute guarantee against fresh outrages. "Lenin is too precious to us—don't let him go!" the working people of Soviet Russia urged. "Let the capitalists come to Moscow instead."

The international situation, domestic problems (the famine had not yet been completely overcome), and Lenin's weak health made it impossible for him to leave the country. For this reason the All-Russia Central Executive Committee had specified, at Lenin's own insistence, that if he were unable to go to Genoa all his powers as chairman would be conferred on Chicherin, his deputy.

Lenin did an immense amount of work in preparation for the conference. He formulated the delegation's program; mapped out precisely the various class forces, tendencies, and groupings operating in the capitalist world; pointed out ways of how conflicts among the imperialists might be exploited; and made prognoses on how political and economic relations between Soviet Russia and Western countries might develop. All this contributed to the success of the Soviet delegation's work in Genoa.

On the night of March 28 the Soviet delegation, including Chicherin and Litvinov, left for Genoa from Vindava (Riga) station. The experts and some of the technical personnel did not leave until later. As N. N. Lyubimov (who was one of the delegation's experts at Genoa) recalls, Vindava station was at that time Moscow's "gateway" to Europe. The route through Latvia and Riga was the most tranquil and convenient.

Train travel was slow; it was not till the morning of March 30 that the delegation arrived in Riga. There some of its members broke their journey to attend a conference between the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Poland) and the Soviet republic, which was held March 29 and 30. The problems discussed included rebuilding Eastern Europe's economic life, regulating trade relations among the countries represented, and guaranteeing peace in Eastern Europe.[32] Agreement was reached on concerted action in Genoa. The Estonian, Latvian, and Polish delegates were of the opinion that the Soviet government ought to be recognized *de jure*. The decisions made in Riga helped break Estonia and Latvia away from the capitalists' united front and blunted the anti-Soviet edge of the Genoa conference.

The Berlin Talks

From Riga the Soviet delegation went to Berlin through Latvia, East Prussia, and the Danzig corridor. Part of the delegation, led by Chicherin, arrived in the German capital

on April 1 at one in the afternoon. That same evening the delegation's bureau held a meeting in the RSFSR's mission at 7 Unter den Linden, near the Brandenburg gates, to consider the question of talks with the German government.[33]

Defeated in World War I and compelled to sign the Versailles treaty, the Weimar republic was now trying to break out of its political isolation and build economic ties with other countries. If Germany and Russia could work together, much might be done to protect the vital interests of both. Germany would gain by weakening the political and economic blockade that had been imposed on it; Soviet Russia by normalizing relations with an important capitalist country, achieving mutual renunciation of claims, and organizing economic and political cooperation based on *de jure* recognition.

Lenin believed that before the Genoa conference unofficial talks should be held in secret with a number of bourgeois governments "on a *preliminary* marking out of the *line* at Genoa." These should include off-the-record talks "in Berlin and Moscow with the Germans about *contacts* between us and them at Genoa."[34]

Talks with German industrialists and diplomats had been held in January and February of 1922. Two captains of German industry, Hugo Stinnes and Alfred Krupp, played the decisive role. It quickly became clear, however, that the Germans intended to set up an international consortium and ruthlessly exploit Russia's economic resources. The Soviet government worked to block plans for such a consortium and sought close ties with German business circles.

On arriving in Berlin, the Soviet delegation continued the talks begun in January and February, although it harboured no illusions about the Wirth-Rathenau government's readiness to make an agreement before the Genoa conference.[35] As Chicherin reported to Moscow, the Germans were pretending eagerness while in fact putting obstacles in the way by advancing unacceptable and onerous conditions.

A preliminary meeting was held on April 2 between Chicherin and Maltzahn, head of the Russian department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It emerged there that the main difficulty would be the claims of private German citizens whose property had been nationalized by the Soviet government.

On April 3 Chicherin and Litvinov were received by Chancellor Wirth. Wirth was evasive and vague, complaining of Germany's troubles, the government's and the capitalists' lack of means, and the weakness of government influence on capitalists. The same day, Chicherin met with Rathenau. Chicherin remembered the foreign minister's pleasant baritone. Rathenau went on and on, obviously listening to the sound of his own voice, making profuse expressions of friendship. It was a simple diplomatic game; behind his polite phrases, Rathenau remained intractable.

Rathenau understood that the idea of setting up a consortium was unrealistic, but nonetheless demanded that Germany, in return for renouncing it, be given precedence in all concessions.[36] After talks lasting ten and a half hours and a formal luncheon in honour of the Soviet delegation, it was clear the Germans would not sign any agreement before the Genoa conference.

Summing up the Berlin talks and the reasons why Wirth and Rathenau refused to sign an agreement, Chicherin wrote in his report to Moscow: "We had no luck in Germany, and what is more we have no doubt that Germany, because of its policy towards the Entente, prefers to postpone any agreement with us.... The Wirth government still has hopes of buttering up or mollifying Britain."[37]

Wirth and Rathenau were merely making a show of negotiating an agreement in the hopes that the terms of the Versailles treaty might be revised. On April 5, a meeting of the German government chaired by President Ebert adopted Rathenau's suggestion against signing an agreement with Soviet Russia.

The Old Genoa

After the talks in Berlin the Soviet delegates set off for Genoa. As long as the train was travelling through German territory, they confined themselves to admiring the view through the windows. Getting out was not recommended; there were still considerable numbers of White Guard renegades in Germany.

The train arrived in Genoa at twelve o'clock on April 6. In April and May of 1922 this ancient city, and the seven hundred year old Palazzo di San Giorgio, were to be the scene of political battles between the young Soviet republic,

represented by Chicherin, Litvinov, Krasin, and others, and the capitalist world, represented by Lloyd George, Louis Barthou (the French minister of justice and an important politician in his own right), Wirth, and Italian Prime Minister Facta.

The Soviet delegation was graciously welcomed at Santa Margherita station by the prefect of Genoa Province, a representative of the commissioner in charge of organizing the conference, and the station superintendent. True, the square outside the station, ringed with troops, was nearly empty. The Italian government, under the pretense of protecting the Soviet delegates, attempted to isolate them from the working people and prevent any expression of sympathy with the Soviet republic. The Genoa garrison was reinforced with 25,000 carabineers, hussars, and royal guards. [38]

Four floors of the Hotel Imperiale, in the suburb of Santa Margherita (30 kilometers south of Genoa) were reserved for the Soviet delegates, experts, and other personnel—63 people in all.

At the suggestion of the Italian Communist Party, couriers for the Soviet delegation were appointed from among the workers of the largest factories of Genoa (the Ansaldo shipyard), Milan (Breda), and Turin (Fiat). "Red militia" brigades (as well as the official carabineer and police guards) accompanied the Soviet delegates in Santa Margherita and Genoa. At that time the Italian Riviera was teeming with White Guards, and despite government assurances the city was not entirely safe for the delegates. The newspaper *Il Mondo* later published reports about an abortive plot headed by Boris Savinkov, who had travelled to Genoa to see it through.

But the Soviet delegates ignored the danger and mingled with the people. Chicherin was especially popular, and not only as head of the delegation: the Italians affirmed that his ancestors had come from their country. Greetings, flowers, and gifts poured in from workers' organizations, clubs, and municipalities, including the city of Milan. As *Pravda* noted, "the Italian press is giving more attention to the Russian delegation than to all the other delegations combined." [39]

Why Didn't the USA Go to Genoa?

The government of the United States of America refused to take part in the work of the Genoa conference. American imperialists in the vanguard of the anti-Soviet forces opposed normalizing diplomatic relations or even including Soviet Russia in international conferences. They wanted to keep the socialist government diplomatically and economically isolated.

As the opening date of the conference approached, aggressive elements of the American imperialist bourgeoisie—monopolists, senators, politicians, reactionary union leaders, and the yellow press—mounted a broad campaign against US participation. The reactionaries were led by billionaires and millionaires such as Morgan, Rockefeller, and Du Pont. Chief among their minions were President Harding (who helped inspire America's anti-Soviet policies), Secretary of State Charles Hughes, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover (who held considerable "interests" in tsarist Russia), and Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon (an important Pittsburgh banker). All these men actively opposed recognizing the Soviet government and declared that allowing it to participate in Genoa would be equivalent to extending full *de jure* recognition. This policy was clearly at odds with the USA's own national interests.

An opposing group, less influential but quite numerous, also existed. It represented the middle and petty bourgeoisie engaged in industry, finance, and commerce, which had an interest in trade with Soviet Russia as well as other European countries. Together with a broad segment of the progressive American public, it favoured normalization of Soviet-American political and economic relations.

Another reason for the USA's refusal to participate officially in the conference was the question of debts among the Allies. American financiers regarded the European powers' debts to them, which amounted to $11.3 billion (exclusive of interest), as a tool for influencing their policies. The US government was worried that the leaders at Genoa—America's debtors—might raise the question of cancelling or reducing these debts, thus setting a dangerous precedent.

Furthermore, the USA did not want to help strengthen Britain, its rival in the struggle for world domination. The Harding administration also feared that US participation

in Genoa would lead to nullification or revision of the treaties just worked out at the Washington Conference, which were advantageous to the USA.[40]

Still, the main reason for the USA's refusal to participate was the desire to continue interfering in Soviet Russia's internal affairs while keeping it diplomatically and economically isolated.

On March 8, 1922, in a note to the Italian ambassador, the American government declined the invitation to Genoa, saying that the planned discussion of the "Russian question" showed the conference would be mainly political, rather than economic.[41] The economic "rebirth" of Russia, the note said flatly, could be achieved only by restoring the capitalist order.

It should be noted that the decision not to go to Genoa was made not by Congress but by few members of the administration (principally Harding and Hughes) and senators. A number of congressmen took the opposite point of view.[42]

American politicians also sought to hold together the capitalist powers' united front against Soviet Russia. They tried to undermine the conference by exerting pressure on Britain, France, and Italy. The US ambassador to Italy, Richard W. Child, was sent to Genoa as an "observer" for the same purpose. America's oil monopolies also sent emissaries; US newspapers reported that two companies, Royal Dutch Shell and Standard Oil, were expected to fight a gigantic battle over Russia's oilfields. Representatives of metallurgical trusts and American banks greatly influenced the entire course of the conference, contributing much to its failure.

On Monday, April 10, at three o'clock in the afternoon (Central European time), the conference opened in the thirteenth-century Palazzo di San Giorgio, just a few dozen meters from the port of Genoa. The Hall of Transactions (the name itself highly symbolic) was crowded with representatives from twenty-nine countries—thirty-four counting the British dominions. In addition to the delegates (some 110 from Britain alone), nearly 300 reporters and photographers from the most important capitalist and progressive newspapers and news agencies came for the conference. Among them were Marcel Cachin of *L'Humanité*, Ernest Hemingway, and Jacques Sadoul. All eyes were riveted to the Soviet delegation.

Many Western politicians and diplomats were expecting to see Russian "bears" in weather-beaten sheepskin coats. Instead they met well dressed professionals with excellent manners, fluent in several foreign languages. These were the emissaries of the world's first government of workers and peasants, diplomats of the new, Leninist school.

The Genoa Conference Under Way

The Genoa Conference—the largest gathering of European nations of that period—opened with an address by Prime Minister of Italy Luigi Facta. He spoke in Italian, though French and English were the official languages of the conference. Lloyd George was next to speak. He painted a vivid picture of Europe in ruins, the decline and disorganization of trade and industry, and the dogs of militarism barking madly, deafeningly. "What is the first need of Europe?" Lloyd George asked. "Peace—a real peace." [43]

Barthou's speech consisted of generalities. He said there could be no revision of the existing treaties. He defended the Cannes conditions. Next to speak were Kikujiro Ishii of Japan and Georges Theunis of Belgium. Wirth, speaking in German, complained of his country's burdens. [44]

Total silence descended on the hall when Facta announced that Chicherin would speak for the Soviet delegation. The delegates, journalists, and numerous guests of the conference had been awaiting this moment impatiently. Chicherin spoke calmly and quietly, in impeccable French, with the dignity befitting a representative of the first socialist nation. His speech lasted twenty minutes. The Soviet declaration reflected the principal Leninist theses. It was notably practical and concrete. It said the Soviet delegation, adhering to the Communist point of view, believed that the two property systems must cooperate economically "on the basis of reciprocity, equal rights, and full and complete recognition." [45] Thus the Soviet delegation raised the question of full *de jure* recognition on its very first day at the conference.

Chicherin also pointed out that all efforts to rebuild the world economy would be vain as long as the constant threat of war hung over Europe and the whole world. For this reason the Russian delegation (following Lenin's directive) would work consistently for the realization of Soviet for-

eign policy and for peace. It intended, in the course of the conference, to propose a general reduction of armaments.

The declaration set forth the two main principles of Soviet foreign policy: peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems, and the proposal for a general reduction of armaments—an idea advanced by the Soviet government at the very first international conference in which Soviet Russia participated. The call for peaceful coexistence resounded with historical significance. The Soviet delegation had shown up "pacifists" like Lloyd George, who hypocritically spoke of peace while supporting the arms race and new military ventures.

Chicherin's speech (not read from a written text) was heard with the greatest attention. It was the first time a Soviet representative had spoken at such a large international forum. When it was over, part of the audience applauded.[46] But when he repeated it in excellent English (this was before the days of simultaneous translations) the thunder of applause swept away all diplomatic conventions. It was not only a tribute to the Soviet delegate's gifts as a linguist and orator but also a reaction to profound morality of the Leninist program, which touched on the fate of tens and hundreds of millions.

The French representative, Louis Barthou, was particularly hostile in his response to the Soviet government's declaration. As instructed by Poincaré, he sharply attacked the Soviet proposals for disarmament and an international conference, threatening to walk out if such matters were discussed.[47] In doing so, Barthou revealed himself as an advocate of the arms race.*

Barthou was supported by Lloyd George, who characterized Chicherin's suggestions as "dangerous." A lover of metaphor and imagery, he said the conference faced heavy weather ahead and asked Chicherin not to sink the ship by overloading it.[48]

On the very first day of the conference, Soviet diplomacy had won a victory over the ingenuity and experience of Britain, France, and other capitalist countries. The press noted Barthou's defeat[49] and the momentous daring of the Soviet peace proposal.

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* In the early 1930s, Barthou himself was to fall victim to the Nazi aggressors and their Croatian henchmen.

In Genoa, Soviet diplomats showed they could combine firmness and consistency with flexibility in tactics. They advanced a broad pacifist program. The leading article in *Pravda* said: "We won the first battle at this international conference because behind us is the strength of Soviet Russia, the strength of the proletariat in all countries." [50] This was not to be the last triumph of Soviet diplomacy in Genoa.

The London Experts' Memorandum

The Soviet delegation had put forward its pacifist program, and now negotiations for an agreement began. Four commissions were created: one for the political or "Russian" question (called Commission No. 1 at Lloyd George's suggestion), one for finance, one for the economy and commerce, and one for transportation. French delegates attempted unsuccessfully to have Soviet Russia admitted only to the first of these. The active participation of Soviet representatives in all four was an acknowledgement of Soviet Russia as a great power.

It was at a session of one of the political commission's subcommittees that a memorandum, prepared by experts in London between March 20 and 28, was handed to the Soviet delegation. [51] It presented a program for turning Soviet Russia into a colony of the West European capitalists.

The report had two parts. The first was called "Russia," the second, "Restoration of Europe". The first part presented conditions under which Soviet Russia was to be shamelessly exploited. In return to "help" from foreign capitalists, the Soviet government was to undertake the financial obligations of the tsarist and provisional governments and of defunct authorities at all levels.

The experts demanded that nationalized foreign property be restored or compensated. They also wanted to set up a commission on the Russian debt and courts of arbitration to handle the claims of foreigners. Cases involving foreigners were to be tried in special courts, in effect placing them outside Soviet jurisdiction. This was characteristic of the system of capitulations imposed on semi-colonial countries. Soviet labour laws would be abrogated and the monopoly on foreign trade ended. The memorandum's second part was very hazy and diffuse.

The memorandum was a detailed imperialist program for bringing back capitalism and destroying what had been won in the October Revolution. The monopolists and politicians of the capitalist countries were making a fresh attempt at economic intervention.

It was at this period that economic warfare between socialism and capitalism reached its height, and fierce battles were fought at the conference itself. Now it was clear what Lloyd George meant by his deceitful talk of "restoring" Russia: the restoration of the capitalist order. What had proved impossible to achieve by armed force was now to be achieved by money.

The fate of the conference depended on whether the capitalist politicians would insist on their demands, which were totally unacceptable to Soviet Russia. The critical moment was at hand.

The Meeting at the Villa d'Albertis

Having received the memorandum, the Soviet delegates demanded time to study it and prepare an answer. Meanwhile they were invited by Lloyd George to the Villa d'Albertis, the private suburban residence where he was staying. The meeting took place on April 14. "It is only today that the Genoa Conference begins," Barthou told journalists.

Seated at the green-draped conference table were Lloyd George, Barthou, Schanzer, the Belgian representative Theunis, their closest advisers, and experts. Later the experts were sent out. Chicherin, Litvinov, and Krasin represented the Soviet side.

Lloyd George opened the meeting by asking Chicherin what he thought of the London experts' program. Chicherin declared it absolutely unacceptable regarding both the payment of debts and the restitution of nationalized property. "It has once again been made plain," Chicherin reported to Moscow, "what an immense difference there is between the other side's views and our own."[52] These differences involved all of the key questions.

The morning of the next day, April 15, there was a meeting of experts. Litvinov, Krasin, and Lyubimov represented the Soviet side. Litvinov revealed, for the first time, the figure Soviet Russia claimed in compensation for the damage done by foreign intervention and the blockade of 1918-

1920: 39 billion gold roubles. There were additional damages that could not be calculated precisely. With these, the total of Soviet counterclaims amounted to 50 billion roubles. [53]

A meeting of heads of delegations and experts opened at the Villa d'Albertis that afternoon at 4:30. Lloyd George, stunned by the size of the counterclaims, declared them utterly incomprehensible and said there could be no sense in negotiating until the Russian delegation recognized its government's debts. The heads of the other Western delegations likewise refused to discuss the Soviet counterclaims. They also demanded that foreign property in Russia be restored or compensated and threatened to walk out of the conference if this was not done.

The Soviet delegation refused to yield. Lloyd George and Barthou, acting in a united front, demanded a categorical answer on the question of debts. The Soviet delegation beat off this frontal assault and then, at Rapallo, delivered a crushing counterattack.

Success at Rapallo

When it became clear that the governments of Britain and France wanted to impose punitive conditions, Soviet representatives decided to continue the talks that had stalled in Berlin through the fault of Wirth and Rathenau. They hoped in so doing to break the united front of the imperialist powers.

It had been Lenin's brilliant plan to make use of the conflicts between Germany, forced onto a bed of Procrustes by the treaty of Versailles, and the victorious Allies. This was accomplished at Rapallo. What were the Germans' motives in signing the treaty? Having failed to reach an understanding with the Western powers behind Russia's back, the German ruling elite was forced to consider settling its political and economic relations with the Soviet republic. Genoa was filled with disturbing rumours circulated by delegates, advisers, and the omnipresent journalists. The secret talks at the Villa d'Albertis, they said, were about to produce an agreement between Soviet Russia and the Allies. Germany would be left out in the cold.

Litvinov reported to Moscow: "Our semi-private talks [in the Villa d'Albertis—*F. V.*] with the Supreme Council have sown concern in the hearts of the Germans. Rathenau, more

dead than alive, came hurrying around yesterday and offered to sign, on the spot, the very agreement he turned down when we were in Berlin." [54]

Rathenau had received from several sources reports that the talks between the Western powers and Soviet Russia were going well. He ordered Maltzahn to "renew the exchange of opinions with the Russians that was interrupted in Berlin." On April 15, Maltzahn met on the veranda of the Palazzo Reale with Soviet representatives who spoke in favour of the agreement they proposed in Berlin.

The Germans, though, were still double-dealing. Immediately after his conversation with the Soviet representatives, Maltzahn went to meet Wise, Lloyd George's trusted economic adviser. According to D'Abernon, who was then Britain's ambassador to Germany, several members of the British delegation, including Wise himself, had informed Lloyd George in detail of plans for an agreement between Germany and Soviet Russia. [55] Lloyd George remained calm and cool, evidently being certain no such agreement would be signed. This time his Welsh aplomb let him down.

At about two in the morning on April 16, a telephone rang in the hotel where the Germans were staying. The caller was A. V. Sabanin, an adviser to the Soviet delegation, head of the economics and law department of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. He asked Maltzahn to convey to Chancellor Wirth an invitation from Chicherin. If the German delegation would come to the Hotel Imperiale in Santa Margherita at eleven o'clock, the talks begun in Berlin could be continued.

The Germans assembled in Maltzahn's room to discuss their difficult situation. This "historic" gathering was later to be known in the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the Pajamas Meeting. Rathenau still hoped for a general settlement, particularly with the Western countries. But this was unrealistic. Maltzahn and Hilferding, the delegation's economic expert, were in favour of negotiating. Wirth agreed. The energetic Wirth telephoned President Ebert, a social democrat and bitter enemy of Soviet Russia, and overcame his objections. Early that morning a telegram was sent to Berlin. "Judging from the political situation here as a whole," it said, "a separate agreement must be signed with Russia to ensure German rights. . . .All representatives of parties and experts present here insist on an agreement to avoid isolation." [56]

Avoiding isolation and gaining the advantages of priority in an agreement with Soviet Russia, having failed to reach an agreement with the Western powers—such were the chief motives of Wirth and Rathenau in signing the Rapallo Treaty.

The final negotiations took place at the splendid Villa Spinolla, in Rapallo. (The Hotel Imperiale, although just across the road, was in Santa Margherita.) Rathenau, Maltzahn, and von Simson, the German Secretary of State, met with Chicherin and Litvinov at eleven. After settling final details in a brief discussion, Chicherin and Rathenau signed the agreement and exchanged notes supplementing it.[57]

One of the most important provisions of the Rapallo Treaty was the establishment of diplomatic and consular relations between Germany and the Soviet republic. Germany extended *de jure* recognition to the Soviet government and renounced claims arising out of nationalization decrees. Economic cooperation and trade were to be conducted on most favoured nation basis. Lenin saw in the Rapallo Treaty recognition that the "two property systems" should enjoy fully equal rights until the higher property system was established everywhere in the world.[58] He placed great political importance on the treaty.

Of course it was not only fear of a separate agreement between Russia and the Allies that led Germany to sign the Rapallo Treaty. Germany stood to gain great economic advantages from a treaty with Soviet Russia, which had won considerable international prestige.

Germany had pushed in ahead of its competitors and thereby helped to break the united anti-Soviet front. Barthou, as instructed by Poincaré (and with the support of Ambassador Child, the American "observer"), insisted that Germany and Russia be presented with an ultimatum demanding annulment of the Rapallo Treaty. If this was not done France would walk out of the conference.[59] After a meeting at the Italian delegation's villa (Germany and Russia were not invited), the Allies demanded that the Germans annul their treaty with the Bolsheviks. Otherwise they would be excluded from discussions of the "Russian question". The Germans' interest in trade with Soviet Russia was so great, however, that they chose to be left out of the work of Commission No. 1.

Preposterous rumours circulated of a military alliance under which Germany was to supply Soviet Russia with

arms and ammunition. Later on Curzon asked a question about this in Parliament; Lloyd George denied that a Slavic-Teutonic alliance had been forged. At the end of April, Chicherin sent Barthou a letter denying in the most categorical terms that the Rapallo Treaty contained "so much as a single secret article, military or political." [60]

In the West the signing of the treaty was likened to a bomb going off or a thunderclap. *The Times* called it the most dramatic event of the Genoa Conference and accused the Russians of conniving, the Germans of short-sightedness. Churchill, in a letter to Curzon, expressed concern at the rapprochement between Germany and Russia. He would have liked to see Britain, France, and Germany allied against Soviet Russia. [61]

Progressive public opinion around the world welcomed the treaty, as did business circles with an interest in normalizing relations with the Soviet republic. The German Communist Party declared: "The Russian delegation has reached out to Germany and concluded with it a just treaty, advantageous to both nations." [62]

The Rapallo Treaty marked a historic turning point. Mikhail Kalinin wrote of it: "The path towards friendly relations and economic rapprochement on which the Russian and German peoples have embarked is clearly mapped out." [63] The treaty was in keeping with the spirit of the times and the needs of both parties.

Work Continues in Genoa

After the signing of the Rapallo Treaty, those who had been against the Genoa Conference—particularly the French—began to say it was a failure. But even though it was on crutches, as a *Le Matin* political analyst quipped, it went on working. Britain, particularly interested in an agreement with Soviet Russia, was not ready to quit. Italy went along. France was afraid to slam the door, fearing that no one would follow its example.

On April 20 the Soviet delegation made a fitting answer to the London experts' memorandum. [64] The Soviet memorandum decisively rejected the capitalists' baseless demands, especially regarding the payment of previous governments' war debts and the restitution of nationalized property to foreign owners. No foreign interference in the internal affairs

of the Soviet republic would be tolerated. But while categorically refusing to return nationalized enterprises to their former owners in Russia, the Soviet government was willing to rent a number of factories and mines.

The Soviet memorandum named *de jure* recognition as one of the chief conditions for restoring economic order in Europe and rebuilding in Russia. The capitalist countries, on the contrary, considered settlement of their claims as a condition for recognition. They demanded one-sided concessions and were unwilling to extend credits to Soviet Russia or consider its counterclaims.

Both before and during the conference, Lloyd George called for a "probation period," during which the Soviet republic was to be transformed. He wanted to extend *de facto* rather than *de jure* recognition. Like the French and the Belgians, he hoped to shackle Soviet Russia economically and impose a system of capitulations—all in return for minimal concessions.

Having adopted an uncompromising position, the capitalists continued with their destructive tactics. The eight-government memorandum handed to the Soviet delegation on May 2 was a direct attempt to establish a system of capitulations. Written by Lloyd George, it was a step back even from the harsh conditions set forth by the London experts. Oil magnates, who continued to regard Soviet Russia as a conquered country, were becoming involved in the workings of the conference. The memorandum called for the Soviet government to recognize all pre-war debts and state liabilities. Nationalized property was to be returned to the former owners; where this was impossible full compensation was to be made. At the same time the Allies refused to act on Soviet counterclaims. [65]

On May 11 the Soviet delegation responded with a memorandum rejecting the Allies' draconian conditions. "The popular masses of Russia," it said, "could not accept an agreement in which concessions were not balanced by real advantages." [66] Although the Genoa conference did not formally close until May 19, the presentation of this memorandum marked the end of its practical work.

Lloyd George Tries to Save Face

Trying to camouflage the failure of the conference, Lloyd George seized upon the Soviet suggestion that a mixed com-

mission of experts be created to settle disagreements between Soviet Russia and the Western nations. The *Echo de Paris* wrote on May 14, 1922 that Lloyd George was trying to "prolong the agony" of the conference.

The last plenary session was held May 14. It adopted Schanzer's proposal for creating two commissions—a "non-Russian" and a "Russian." Both were to meet at The Hague on June 26, 1922, to consider questions discussed in Genoa but not decided.[67] So as to weaken the impression made by the Soviet proposal for a general reduction of armaments, it was decided that the Soviet and Allied governments should agree to refrain from all hostilities for four months after the commissions had concluded their work.[68]

The closing speeches began. First was Lloyd George, who spared no effort to save face by showing that the conference was a "success." Still, he could not resist warning his listeners (it was clear for whom his words were meant) not to give loans until debts were paid.

Barthou, who followed the "great orator" (as he sarcastically described Lloyd George), also tried to convince the audience that Genoa had proved a success. Facta spoke to the same effect.

Chicherin's speech gave the Soviet appraisal of the conference. It also contained a stern rebuke to Lloyd George. It meant a great deal, he said, that all the governments of Europe had come together, without distinction between victor and vanquished or between property systems. Nonetheless, "the immediate results of the conference do not come up to the great hopes it aroused among the peoples of all nations."[69]

The conference proved a disappointment because the question of disarmament was shelved and because the principle of equality between states with different social systems was not observed. Upholding Lenin's principle of peaceful coexistence, Chicherin proclaimed: "The Russian people is inspired with a deep desire for peace and cooperation with other nations but only, of course, on the basis of full equality."[70]

By rejecting the principle of equality in negotiations, the representatives of the imperialist countries had doomed the Genoa Conference to failure. Another all-out attempt at economic anti-Soviet intervention had come to nothing.

The struggle between two vast oil monopolies also had much to do with the failure of the conference. These were

Royal Dutch Shell, a British and Dutch concern headed by Henry Deterding, and Rockefeller's Standard Oil. "In oil is written [the history of—*F. V.*] the British and German-Turk military campaigns in the Caucasus, the Allied interventions against the Soviets and support of puppet counter-revolutionary governments, and the international conferences at Genoa and The Hague," wrote the noted American economist Ludwell Denny.[71]

Fierce battles were fought over Soviet oil. Rockefeller's emissaries to Genoa strove to keep Royal Dutch Shell from snapping up concessions in Baku. They hoped the Soviet government would return their company's assets, bought from Nobel for next to nothing. Royal Dutch Shell had been seeking a monopoly in Baku since October 1921, when Deterding's representative, Colonel Boyle, opened negotiations with Krasin in London.

The US government and the heads of Standard Oil were greatly concerned by rumours of Colonel Boyle's activities in Genoa. Secretary of State Hughes demanded that Ambassador Child make secret inquiries about an agreement between Boyle and the Russians, authorizing an unofficial meeting with the Russians for this purpose.[72] Child immediately reported back that the Russians and British denied any agreement had been signed. Acting on instructions from Hughes (read: from Standard Oil), Child warned the heads of the British, French, and Belgian delegations that the US government would not tolerate any private or general agreement granting special privileges regarding industry or trade in Russia.

The *Times*, reflecting Deterding's interests, fired back: "The British Government will not countenance any agreement calculated to give to any oil group a virtual monopoly in Russia."[73]

Lloyd George met with Child in early May. He denied rumors of an agreement between Soviet Russia and Royal Dutch Shell. He admitted, however, that if the Genoa Conference was a failure, the "danger" would arise of separate, private agreements between different countries and companies, including Royal Dutch Shell. After this meeting, Hughes advised the State Department to end the conference at once so as to prevent any separate agreements with Soviet Russia and save the unity of the anti-Soviet bloc.

Hughes and Harding were reflecting the interests of the oil monopolies, first and foremost Standard Oil, which did

not want an agreement with Soviet Russia. Child, as instructed by the US government, gave all possible support to the French and Belgians, who also wanted to wreck the conference.

The failure of the Genoa Conference was due not only to the Anglo-American battle over oil, which was merely a part of the larger struggle for markets, raw materials, investment opportunities, and hegemony in Europe and the world. The American imperialists were afraid that if the conference succeeded the capitalists' anti-Soviet front would be split and Britain would gain broader access to the Russian market.

As an article in the influential British journal *Foreign Affairs* put it: "When the history of the Genoa Conference comes to be written with full knowledge, some historian of the future will say that its result was satisfactory to one Government only, the Government of Russia."[74] And in fact Soviet diplomacy, by concluding the Rapallo Treaty, did win an important victory at Genoa. It broke the capitalists' anti-Soviet front by exploiting conflicts among them. The imperialists tried to restore capitalism in Russia by diplomatic pressures, to intervene economically, to repeal the decrees of the October Revolution nationalizing industry and banks, and to extract payment for the debts of the tsarist and provisional governments. In all these efforts they were defeated. Bargaining, not bondage was the device of the Soviet diplomats at Genoa.[75]

In Genoa, and subsequently at The Hague, the idea of a general agreement between the capitalist countries and Soviet Russia gave way to that of bilateral agreements establishing trade and diplomatic relations. The conference was a step towards *de jure* recognition of the Soviet government. It showed capitalist politicians that Europe's economic difficulties could not be overcome unless Soviet Russia was included in the world economic system. In Genoa the Soviet government came forward with a scientifically constructed program for peaceful cooperation between states with different social systems, and announced for the first time its program for disarmament.

The negotiations in Genoa opened a new era in European diplomacy. They were an indication of Soviet Russia's growing might and authority in international affairs. Genoa was an important success for active, Leninist diplomacy in the struggle for peace, security, and the establishment of normal relations between the socialist and capitalist systems.

Chapter 6

The Failure of the Curzon Ultimatum

The imperialists had tried their hand at economic intervention during the Genoa and Hague conferences. In mid-1923 several attempts were made to renew military intervention. One of these was the Curzon ultimatum, presented to the Soviet government by Britain on May 8, 1923. It came as a climax to the intensifying anti-Soviet campaign the Bonar Law-Curzon government had conducted ever since its first days in power.

The Bonar Law-Curzon government (known as the "cabinet of second-rate minds") replaced the coalition government of Lloyd George in October of 1922. Lloyd George was blamed for the failure of the "Russian policy," the disappointment at Genoa, the growth of Britain's economic woes, the deterioration of Anglo-French relations, and the bankruptcy of Greek policy. The Conservatives felt there was no longer any advantage in continuing their coalition with the Liberals, and in particular with Lloyd George, who had "ruined" the Liberal party.

The post of Foreign Secretary once again went to the aristocratic George Nathaniel Curzon of Kedleston. He was an implacable enemy of Soviet Russia, one of the authors of anti-Soviet intervention, a prominent representative of British imperialism, and an ideologue of Britain's predatory eastern policies. Curzon worked to crush the national liberation movement among the peoples of the British empire, particularly in India (where he was Viceroy from 1899 to 1905). He represented the class interests of the rentiers, the landed aristocracy, and those industrialists who had no interest in trade with Soviet Russia. His principal aim was to defend Britain's empire jealously, using every possible means. British humorists said Curzon wanted to become viceroy of Europe.

With the coming to power of Bonar Law's Conservative government, anti-Soviet policies were pursued on a larger scale. Lord Curzon, now unchallenged master of the Foreign Office and Britain's foreign policy, carried out the social orders of the City, the Federation of British Industries, the banks of the "Big Five," and other monopolies, banks, and businesses. He tried to return British diplomacy to the times of civil war and foreign intervention in Russia, hoping to keep the USSR from getting politically and economically stronger and to halt the growth of its international influence, especially in the countries of the east—Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

Curzon consulted on the "Russian question" with Paul Dukes, a seasoned British spy who had organized plots against the Soviet government in 1918-1919 on assignment from the Intelligence Service. Dukes was also closely connected with the National Center, an underground organization of the White Guards. When the Cheka broke up the National Center, he fled to England.

The international forces of reaction, headed by the British Conservatives, strove with might and main to prevent the successful development of socialism in the Soviet republic. From the beginning of 1923, the British government's actions towards the USSR became ever more hostile and provoking– obviously Curzon's work. On January 1, the mouthpiece of the City, *The Times*, published a bogus "circular" of the Communist Party Politburo, setting off an avalanche of anti-Soviet hysteria.

Even before presenting his ultimatum, Curzon had tried repeatedly to interfere in Soviet internal affairs. The first attempt took the form of a note from Britain's official agent in Moscow, Hodgson, delivered on March 30, 1923. On Curzon's instructions, Hodgson attempted to defend a Polish spy, Monsignor Butkevitch, who had been condemned by a Soviet court.[1] The answering note from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs declared: "Any attempt from outside ... to protect spies and traitors in Russia is a hostile act and a renewal of intervention."[2] Hodgson refused to accept this note. The People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs expressed hope that Britain would refrain from all attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of the Soviet republics. But Britain had no intention of doing so. Quite the contrary.

The next pretext for poisoning relations involved fishing

in the USSR's northern waters. On March 31, the British trawler *James Johnson* was detained by a Soviet gunboat nine miles from the Seven Islands group. It had violated the twelve-mile territorial limit established by a decree of the Soviet government of May 24, 1921.[3] The British trawlers *Magneta* and *St. Hubert* had been detained in January and March of 1922 for similar violations.

In addition to the arguments for a three-mile limit, international law recognizes another way of calculating the extent of territorial waters: the range of shore batteries. In setting the twelve-mile limit, the Soviet government had applied the latter method. It declared its readiness to discuss the question at a conference of all interested states and to take part in working out binding international norms. In the peace-loving spirit characteristic of Soviet foreign policy, it would welcome businesslike talks on all issues between the USSR and Britain.[4] But the Conservative government did not wish any businesslike discussion of unsettled problems and resorted to the method of ultimatums and threats it had developed well in advance, in order to take practical steps at a later stage, up to and including military intervention.

On April 20, the *Daily Herald*, semi-official organ of the Labour Party, reported that the Foreign Office was hatching a plot against the Soviet republic. The power behind these schemes was the Association of British Creditors in Russia, which had a very high stake in restoring capitalism in the Soviet republic. And in fact the Conservative press and some organs of the Liberal press, together with right-wing Conservatives in Parliament, mounted a frenzied anti-Soviet campaign, demanding the abrogation of trade agreements with the USSR. Curzon's mouthpiece, *The Daily Telegraph*, wrote that there was already sufficient justification for recalling the British trade delegation from Moscow.[5] The most reactionary Conservatives demanded that the government renounce its trade agreement with the USSR. To appease them, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs assured the House of Commons that it was "proposed, without delay, to address a serious communication to the Russian Government."[6]

At the end of April, according to the Liberal *Daily News*, the government discussed breaking off relations with the USSR. The London correspondent of the *New York Herald Tribune* filed a similar report.

After a series of notes that amounted to diplomatic range finding, Curzon launched an all-out attack. Without bothering to study the Soviet note in detail, Hodgson presented a memorandum that became known as the "Curzon Ultimatum." It was based on fabrications, and in presenting it to the deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Hodgson was clearly embarrassed, apologizing several times for the unpleasant mission he had to perform.[7]

The memorandum, obviously concocted with the help of the Intelligence Service, was rude and sharp in tone. It falsely accused the Soviet government of spreading anti-British propaganda in India, Iran, and Afghanistan, committing violence against British subjects, detaining British trawlers, and conducting religious persecution in the USSR. Furthermore, it demanded indemnity for C. F. Davison, a British subject shot for espionage in January of 1920 (he had belonged to the organization of anti-Soviet saboteurs headed by Paul Dukes), and for Stan Harding, a woman journalist and spy arrested in the summer of the same year. The British government had advanced these same claims earlier, and they had been rejected.

The memorandum also demanded that the owners of the trawler *Magneta* receive compensation for its sinking, and that the *St. Hubert* and *James Johnson* be returned and compensation paid to their crews. The Soviet government was to give assurances that British vessels would be allowed to fish unmolested off Murmansk up to the three-mile limit. Finally, Curzon demanded retraction of two notes from the Soviet government concerning the clerical spies Cieplak and Butkevitch.

Curzon finished off with a threat. If within ten days the Soviet government did not undertake to "comply fully and unconditionally" with these demands, the trade agreement between the two governments would be annulled.[8]

That Curzon was serious about breaking off relations with the Soviet Union can be seen from a White Paper published by the Foreign Office on May 9, 1923. It gives the text of a letter to Hodgson that accompanied the May 8 memorandum. If in eight days he had received no answer—or an unsatisfactory answer—he and his mission were to return to Britain.

Britain's Conservative press, led by *The Times* and *The*

Daily Telegraph, were delighted by Curzon's "firm" note. Officials of the Foreign Office reported to the government that their sudden and unexpected blow had been a huge success, sowing panic in the Bolshevik camp.[9]

The reactionaries' claims to have thrown the other side into confusion were false, but the Soviet government was fully aware that the situation was a grave one. The Curzon Ultimatum threatened to end the respite won in hard battles against intervention and domestic counterrevolution.

In sending his ultimatum, Curzon planned to halt or hamper the building of socialism and the growth of the USSR's economic and political might. He also wanted to isolate the Soviet Union diplomatically. If conditions were favourable, he was prepared to intervene militarily, confident of broad support from international imperialism.

In his report to the second session of the Central Executive Committee (1924), Chicherin said the Curzon Ultimatum was "undoubtedly part of a broader scheme against the Soviet republics" that could be regarded as "the beginning of a new wave of intervention."[10]

The British imperialists' plans were carelessly revealed by the Italian ambassador to Moscow, Amadori, who was later removed for his indiscretion. In a telegram sent to his government on April 17, he reported that the British were organizing intervention against the USSR.

Britain was to begin the intervention; the USA, Italy, France, and other countries would then follow suit. At the same time Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland were to move against the USSR. Later Britain hoped to involve Japan, Iran, and Afghanistan.[11] Remnants of the White Guards and other counterrevolutionary forces were to foment rebellion within the Soviet Union. The trial of the SRs, held in Moscow in July and August of 1922, had shown that surviving counterrevolutionary forces in the USSR were being supported mainly by the British imperialists.[12]

Many well informed people in Britain spoke of the danger of renewed intervention against the Soviet Union. A number of progressive Liberals and Labourites in Parliament (for example, Kenworthy, Morel, and Ponsonby) said that in presenting the ultimatum the British government was thinking not only of breaking off trade relations, but of declaring war. A Labour newspaper, the *Daily Herald*, compared the Curzon Ultimatum to the note Austria-Hungary had pres-

ented to Serbia on the eve of the First World War, when Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo. It noted that previously such a note from one great power to another would have meant war. [13]

The British government backed up its threat with a number of military measures. In early May, a military mission headed by Field-Marshal French (Commander-in-Chief of the British army during World War I) went to inspect Romania's army and its border with the USSR. [14] Lord Cavan, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, went to inspect the Polish army. At the same time, Marshal Foch of France was concluding an inspection tour in Poland and Czechoslovakia. [15]

British warships at Malta were moved to the Dardanelles, where soon after an entire British squadron arrived. Another squadron was sent to the Baltic and the White Sea. On May 26, two British cruisers, together with other warships and trawlers, appeared near Murmansk. This squadron remained for a long time in Soviet waters, coming in as close as one mile and trying to provoke an incident.

Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs McNeill told Parliament on May 10 that a British warship, the *Harebell*, was nearing Archangel with orders "to prevent interference with British vessels outside the three-mile limit, using force if necessary." [16] At the same time he hypocritically claimed that any idea of war with Russia, or a conflict in that sense, had never for a moment entered into the heads of the Government. A number of leftists in the opposition greeted McNeill's aggressive declaration with cries of indignation: "No more war!" "Why do you not send the Fleet to New York?" [17]

At the same time Britain increased its subsidies to the arms industry in Poland, Romania, and Serbia, and British arms manufacturers received large orders for deliveries to Poland and Romania. There was a real danger that military intervention would be renewed. Britain did not have enough land forces of its own, but was hoping to fight with the armies of other countries that it would draw into its new campaign against the Soviet Russia.

One of the results of the Conservatives' anti-Soviet policies was the murder of Vatslav Vorovsky, who represented Soviet Russia at the Lausanne Conference in 1922-1923 and worked to establish peace in the Middle East. The governments of Britain, France, and Italy had excluded the Soviet

delegation from discussion of all matters except the Straits question. After fierce debates, the conference reopened in April of 1923, and the Soviet delegation was informed that the Straits question had been settled. This was primarily Curzon's doing.

Soviet protests were ignored by the rulers of the imperialist countries. Vorovsky, who was the RSFSR's representative in Rome, arrived in Lausanne on April 27 to take part in the conference. The Swiss government, however, refused to guarantee the safety of Soviet representatives. What was more, a rabid anti-Soviet campaign began, and the Soviet delegation was subjected to harassment. The day before he died, Vorovsky wrote to a counsellor in the RSFSR's mission in Berlin: "They mean to drive us out by hook or by crook." He gave an example: members of the pro-fascist National League had appeared at the Hotel Cecil and demanded that the Soviet delegation get out of Switzerland.

"The Swiss government," Vorovsky's letter continued, "is well informed of this ... and should be held responsible for our safety. The behaviour of the Swiss government is a shameful violation of the guarantees made at the beginning of the conference, and any attack on us in this quintessentially well-ordered country would be impossible without the knowledge and connivance of the authorities. Let them be held responsible." [18]

On May 9, the Soviet government ordered Vorovsky to leave Switzerland. But he did not have time to do so. On the evening of May 10, Maurice Conradi, a former factory owner and member of Denikin's White Guards, walked unhindered into the room at the Hotel Cecil where Vorovsky was dining with two colleagues, M. A. Divilkovsky and I. I. Arens, a ROSTA (Russian Telegraph Agency) correspondent. The assassin fired seven bullets at close range, mortally wounding Vorovsky. Divilkovsky and Arens were also hit. Arens, lying wounded on the floor, tried to fire back but was stopped by the hotel's waiters.

As the police discovered, Conradi had come from Zurich, was living at the Cecil, and had received money and a plan for the assassination from one Polunin, a former tsarist officer, who was in contact with imperialist intelligence services. Earlier, Conradi had traveled to Berlin to see whether it would be possible to assassinate Chicherin or Krasin. [19] The Swiss police had taken no measures to protect the Soviet delegates. After firing his shots, the murderer

calmly went out to the vestibule, lit a cigar, and expressed impatience at the delayed arrival of the police. He was not arrested for another half-hour. Polunin, his accomplice, was released after being detained for a short time.

In a note sent to Switzerland on May 16, the Soviet government stated that "the conduct of the Swiss authorities in this affair must undoubtedly be construed as connivance at one of the gravest of crimes: the murder of a plenipotentiary representative of another country." [20] Responsibility for the crime rested not only with the Swiss government, but also with the great powers whose conduct had created a favourable atmosphere for it. The Soviet government demanded a stringent investigation, leading to "full and complete satisfaction for Russia." The Swiss refused to do this and made a mockery of the subsequent trial. *

For the Soviet people and their government, the connection between the Curzon Ultimatum and the assassination of Vorovsky was clear, as was the role of those who had in fact inspired these anti-Soviet actions. "The report of revolver shots in Lausanne," *Pravda* wrote, "coincided with Mr. Curzon's diplomatic outburst." [22]

The Soviet Reply

Neither threats to abrogate the 1921 trade agreement nor British military measures could intimidate the Soviet people. The situation had changed.

On May 11, three days after receiving the Curzon Ultimatum, the Soviet government replied that "the path of ultimatums and threats is not the path for settling isolated and secondary misunderstandings." [23] The note further indicated that a break in relations with the USSR would significantly damage the British economy.

The Soviet government, recognizing the existing difficulties, was eager to see them completely resolved. It suggested that a conference be held so that authorized representatives of both sides could consider and resolve the disputed

* The trial of Conradi and Polunin, held in the canton of Vaud in November of 1923, was transformed into an anti-Soviet tribunal. The court, flounting the norms of justice, acquitted the murderer. The Soviet government responded with a political and economic boycott, which continued until 1927, when the Swiss were forced to meet the USSR's demands for compensation to Vorovsky's daughter. [21]

secondary questions, and also arrive at a general agreement on Anglo-Soviet relations.[24] The note pointed out that Britain, in dealing with international problems such as the Straits question, eastern Galicia, and Bessarabia, continually ignored the interests of the Soviet republics; and furthermore that British agents were active in the Caucasus, Central Asia, Turkestan, eastern Bukhara, and Vladivostok.[25] The Soviet government refused in the most categorical terms to withdraw its representatives from Iran and Afghanistan.

Refuting false claims that the rights of British subjects—in particular the spies Davison and Stan Harding—had been violated, the note demanded compensation for the shooting of twenty-six commissars by British authorities in Baku, for the assassination of Kolomiitsev, the first Soviet envoy to Iran, for the arrest of the diplomat Babushkin, etc.

Conscious of its own strength and dignity, the Soviet government declared in conclusion that "the position of the Soviet republics is not, cannot be, and will never be one of dependence on the will of a foreign power."[26]

The Curzon Ultimatum, the assassination of Vorovsky, and other events and facts connected with preparations for renewed intervention rocked the entire world and caused immense indignation and anger among the working people of the USSR. At protest demonstrations and meetings throughout the country, thousands upon thousands declared their determination to block the imperialists' machinations and if necessary to take up arms in defence of what they had won in the October Revolution. At a demonstration in Moscow over 500,000 working people marched under the slogans "Hands off the USSR!" "Don't Play with Fire, Mr. Curzon!" and "We Will Fight to the Death in Defence of Our Independence!" The poet Mayakovsky addressed the demonstrators in the square facing the Moscow Soviet. The words of his "Left March" and "The Commune Will Not Be Under the Entente" resounded with especial force.

An extraordinary plenum of the Moscow Soviet was held in the Bolshoi Theater on May 12. There were passionate, patriotic speeches by working people. In a report on the international situation, Chicherin declared that "the reactionaries of the world ... seek to strike a blow against the Soviet republics, which the republics will meet with their united strength."[27] In a fiery speech before the plenum, a peasant woman named Viktorova said, "I will give my heart to be made into bullets for the defence of Soviet power."

The Moscow Soviet adopted a special appeal to workers' parties and to working people all over the world. It called on them to prevent the attack on Soviet Russia that world fascism was planning, to bind the hands of the criminals who would set off a new war. A plenum of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions called on workers in all countries to come to the defence of the Soviet Republic. "Let Lord Curzon remember that the Russian proletariat is not alone, that tens of millions of working people in all countries will come to the aid of the workers and peasants of the USSR." [28] The Petrograd Soviet called on workers in all countries to defend the world's first socialist state. At factories in Moscow, Petrograd, Kiev, Minsk, and many other cities, and likewise in villages, the working people demonstrated their determined opposition to foreign aggressors.

As a neutral diplomat remarked to Arthur Ransome of the *Manchester Guardian* at the plenum of the Moscow Soviet: "It is a misfortune for humanity that the Western European Governments still believe that war will overthrow the Bolsheviks instead of strengthening them." [29]

British Workers' Solidarity with the USSR. Actions by Labour Leaders

Attempts by British imperialists to launch a new military campaign against the USSR met with vigorous protests from working people in the capitalist countries. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, the dockers, textile workers, builders, railwaymen, and printers of Britain gave energetic support to the USSR, as they had at the time of the Civil War.

On receiving news of the Curzon Ultimatum, the leadership of the British Communist Party sent urgent telegrammes to all its committees and public relations workers. There followed detailed instructions on support for the campaign in defence of the USSR conducted by trade unions, cooperatives, and local organizations of the Labour Party. It was recommended that Councils of Action be created, as in 1920, under the slogan "Down with War on the Workers' Republic!" The Central Committee of the British Communist Party published 100,000 copies of a special leaflet, which achieved wide circulation.

"The British Government is again leading the capitalist offensive against the workers' Republic of Russia," declared a manifesto from the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain. "They are sending a provocative Note to Russia with a view to breaking off trade relations and setting the dogs of reaction loose in Europe to provoke war on Russia... Once we stopped war on Russia by a united movement in the Council of Action. Once again the hour has come to prevent war... Get ready for action!... Make peace with Russia!... Up with the Councils of Action! Down with war on the Workers' Republic!" [30]

The call to create Councils of Action to defend the USSR and win recognition for the Soviet government drew a lively response from the working people.

Councils sprang up in Barrow, Falkirk, Newcastle, East Ham, Liverpool, Nottingham, Dundee, and Ballantine (Scotland).

A wave of meetings, conferences, and demonstrations promoted by the Communist Party swept the country in May and June. Resolutions were adopted condemning the Curzon Ultimatum and proposals that Britain break off relations with the Soviet Union. Many of these resolutions also demanded that full *de jure* recognition be granted to the USSR.

On May 13, thousands met in Trafalgar Square under the slogans "Down with War!" "The Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement Must Be Saved!" and "Curzon Must Go!" A resolution was adopted demanding that the government retract the Curzon note. British workers demanded full recognition of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. [31] As *The Workers' Weekly* reported, meetings were held from Dundee to Plymouth, from north to south and east to west.

The "Hands Off Soviet Russia" Committee, whose permanent chairman was William Coates, was active in defending the USSR at this time. Immediately after publication of the Curzon Ultimatum, it warned workers' organizations that Curzon's aim was to break off political relations with the USSR, which would seriously hurt the cause of world peace. On May 24, the committee called on the working people of Britain to give their strong and unanimous support to political action, and if necessary to use "industrial action" (i.e. strikes) to force immediate and unconditional recognition of the Soviet government. [32] On May 21, the annual cooperative congress in Edinburgh unanimously resolved to in-

sist that the government maintain and improve friendly relations with Soviet Russia.

The participants in a mass meeting of engine builders unanimously condemned the Curzon Ultimatum and demanded full recognition of the USSR. On May 25, the General Council of the Trade Union Congress and the Executive Committee of the Labour Party issued resolutions calling for a mitigation of Curzon's policy. This was due entirely to activities among the broad masses of British working people—rank-and-file members of the trade unions and local organizations of the Labour Party and the "Hands Off Soviet Russia" Committee.

Contrary to the will of their reformist leaders, local organizations of the Labour Party and the trade unions campaigned against a break in relations with the USSR. Innumerable resolutions of protest were sent to the Prime Minister. British workers were willing to go further, to use more active political measures in their struggle in support of the USSR. They not only opposed the Curzon Ultimatum, but also demanded normalization of Anglo-Soviet relations and *de jure* recognition of the USSR.

Working people held meetings and demonstrations in support of the Soviet Union in Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, and other countries. A resolution adopted in the name of an international workers' organization for aid to Soviet Russia, signed by Clara Zetkin, Martin Andersen Nexo, Henri Barbusse, and Maxim Gorky, called on workers in all countries to mobilize all their forces and defend the USSR against this new offensive by world capitalism.[33]

While the working people energetically supported Soviet Russia, right-wing Labour and trade union leaders were essentially in sympathy with Curzon. Just two days after the ultimatum was issued, John R. Clynes, a prominent Labour leader, declared that his party would refuse to abet Russian extremists who were trying to humiliate England. On May 10, another Labour leader, Ramsay MacDonald, sent Chicherin a telegramme that supported the Conservative government's threat to use force if more British trawlers were detained. In the name of his party, he asked the Soviet government to refrain from any action that might lead to war.

During the Parliamentary debates on the Curzon note, on May 15, MacDonald upheld the anti-Soviet policy of the "hardheads." Accepting the Conservatives' claims about

Soviet propaganda in the east, he declared: "Our government is perfectly entitled to make its protest in the most energetic and most effective way."[34] He commended the "boldness" of the Bonar Law government in demanding compensation for the British spies caught in the USSR. The Labour leaders' support did not go unappreciated. Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs McNeill expressed delight with the views that MacDonald, Clynes, and Philip Snowden had expressed.[35] MacDonald was greeted with shouts of approval from the Conservative benches.

Right-wing Labour leaders, by refusing to cooperate with the Communist Party in resisting the Curzon Ultimatum, did considerable harm to the movement. They took no part in the meeting of working people in Trafalgar Square on May 13, or in the London demonstration on May 27.[36] By this they showed what it was that dictated their politics: the interests of monopoly capitalism. But the British working class, as it had during the aggression of the Polish bourgeoisie and landowners in 1920, continued to support the world's first socialist state.

Disagreements Among Industrialists and Businessmen

The Curzon Ultimatum caused serious disagreements among British industrialists and businessmen. Those who backed the "hardheads" wanted to unite the imperialist powers for a fresh attempt at military intervention against the Soviet republic.

Chief among the anti-Soviet industrialists was Leslie Urquhart. He had once owned the Kyshtym, Tanalyk, and Ridder mines in the Urals and Siberia, which produced copper, lead, and silver, as well as a million hectares of land and 450 kilometers of railroads. All this had been nationalized by the Soviet government. As head of Russo-Asiatic Consolidated Ltd., Urquhart had been infuriated when the Soviet Union refused, in view of the absence of firmly established relations between the USSR and Britain, to ratify an agreement (signed September 9, 1922) granting concessions to his former holdings.[37]

As chairman of the Association of British Creditors in Russia, Urquhart told representatives of the press on May 26, 1923 that although Curzon's note made no mention of British private capital in Russia, relations between the

two countries could never be normalized until the claims of creditors were satisfied. The Association of British Creditors sent a message to the Foreign Office demanding that the British mission be recalled from Moscow.[38] A representative of the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce declared that the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement of 1921 must be annulled. He said it was of no value, being a document that established trade on a temporary basis.

A meeting of the City's businessmen, chaired by Urquhart, was held on May 31. It was attended by the powers that really shaped British foreign policy: representatives of the banks, the Federation of British Industries, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Council of Foreign Bondholders, etc. The resolution they adopted reflected the policy of ultimatums, threats, and diktat. It demanded that the USSR pay all debts and return, or make compensation for, foreign property that had been nationalized.[39]

The Conservatives, and particularly the "hardheads," insisted on breaking off relations and made baseless claims that the trade agreement with the Soviet Union was of no significance. Lieutenant-Colonel Archer-Shee, a Conservative member who specialized in anti-Soviet diatribes, declared in Parliament: "I hope that no Government will be so foolish as to recognise [the Soviet Union—*F. V.*] *de jure.*"[40] Summing up Parliament's discussion of the ultimatum, McNeill said: "It must not be taken that we mean to be satisfied with anything less than compliance with our demands."[41] In fact, however, the Conservative leaders' threats were empty.

The majority of British industrialists and businessmen had an interest in continuing and extending economic relations with the Soviet Union. They were opposed to annulling the trade agreement and going back to military intervention. Members of Parliament from all parties were inundated by letters from industrialists and businessmen protesting against such a move. As they pointed out, it would ruin all their hopes for profitable trade with Russia. Britain's share of the Russian market would be gobbled up at once by the USA, Germany, and other competitors.

The Liberal *Manchester Guardian*, which reflected the views of British business, wrote that England could not afford to break off trade relations that brought in twelve million pounds sterling each year unless it were irrefutably proved that this was necessary, which in fact had not been

done. Firmer still was the position set forth in a letter to Ramsay MacDonald from the firm of Ruston and Hornsby, which owned factories in Lincoln, Grantham, Stockport, Newark, and Ipswich. "Our experience," it concluded, "is that you can do a great deal with these people (i.e., the Soviet Union—*F. V.*) if you handle them sympathetically." [42]

During the Parliamentary debates on the ultimatum, it was Lloyd George, as leader of the Liberal Party, who expressed most clearly the interests of those who wanted to continue and extend trade with the USSR. Asquith, also a Liberal, was in complete agreement. Although his speech contained several anti-Soviet cliches, Lloyd George made it clear that a break with the USSR would be dangerous and wrong. "A quarrel between two great peoples," he said, "whatever the cause may be, is a calamity which is so great that it is really necessary that we should exercise every caution before we come to any decision at all." He demanded that the government "see that a real peace is established with Russia." [43] Others shared the same ideas.

Labourite leaders could not ignore the mass movement in support of the USSR or the demands of British industrialists and businessmen. They were forced to come out in Parliament against breaking off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. After making a series of anti-Soviet remarks, MacDonald nonetheless came down in favor of keeping the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement. "If the trade agreement be torn up," he said, "a state of incipient war will be created." [44]

All these remarks by Labourites and Liberals were based primarily on a selfish concern for their own interests. Captain O'Grady, another Labour member, had just returned from a trip to Soviet Russia with a committee for aid to famine victims. He spoke of the threat posed by German competition. In Riga, for instance, he had seen locomotives bearing placards: "Made for the Russian Soviet Republican Government, by Krupp and Company, Essen." O'Grady said: "I want this kind of work for my own people in Leeds." [45] Some Labourites went still further. Ponsonby, for example, insisted to Parliament that *de jure* recognition should be given to the Soviet government, which after five and a half years was more stable than ever. [46]

The Liberal and Labourite press, reflecting the opinion of those industrialists and businessmen who would be hurt by a break with the USSR, called for a peaceful settlement. *The Daily News*, for example, wrote that any break would

be wholly the fault of the British government. The *Daily Herald*, a Labour paper, wrote: "The Government ... will realise that in dispatching to Moscow a Note which can only be construed as an attempt to bring to an end all diplomatic and all trade relations between this country and Russia, it has acted directly in opposition to the general will. In commercial circles, in the ranks of Labour, everywhere except among a small and fanatically prejudiced clique, the desire is not for a rupture but for a better understanding." [47]

All this had a decisive influence on the position of the British government. Bonar Law was forced to step down. Although his resignation was officially attributed to failing health, there can be no doubt that it was dictated mainly by the failure of anti-Soviet policies and by the internal conflicts that rent the Conservative Party.

On May 22, 1923, Stanley Baldwin, a representative of British business circles who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer in Bonar Law's Cabinet, became the new Prime Minister. Curzon had wanted the job, but was passed over, primarily because of the failure of his aggressive anti-Soviet policy. The domestic situation occasioned by the ultimatum was so tense that an anti-Soviet politician could not safely be appointed Prime Minister. Even the Labour and Liberal press issued sharp warnings against such a step.

In its makeup, Baldwin's Cabinet differed little from Bonar Law's and Baldwin himself soon proved to be a dyed-in-the-wool anti-Soviet. It was under his government that ARCOS (All-Russian Cooperative Society) was raided and diplomatic relations broken off.

In the further course of Anglo-Soviet negotiations, the British government was forced to retreat. Curzon, who remained as Foreign Secretary in Baldwin's Cabinet, was twice forced to extend his deadline and, in fact, abandon the ultimatum.

When it rejected the Curzon Ultimatum, the Soviet government had sent Krasin to London to settle its affairs in Britain and oversee the removal of its property. In London business circles, however, his arrival was taken as a sign that broader economic ties with Britain were desired.

In an interview with businessmen and journalists, Krasin said that any break between Britain and the Soviet Union would be "catastrophic for the whole world." He particularly stressed that abrogating the trade agreement would bring all

trade between the two countries to an end. "The powers of the Entente must understand," he concluded, "that they have not been able to destroy Soviet Russia in years of armed intervention, and ... Soviet Russia will not perish if the trade agreement is torn up." [48]

Krasin also met with Lloyd George. Viewing things from the sidelines, the former Prime Minister declared that neither Curzon nor Poincaré was suited to conduct world politics. He characterized the Soviet note replying to the ultimatum as rather severe in tone, but dignified. [49]

At the same time Krasin began negotiating new deals with British industrialists, businessmen, and bankers. These negotiations, and the increased interest in Soviet markets that they generated among the British bourgeoisie, did much to prevent a break in Anglo-Soviet relations. Industrialists, businessmen, and others brought pressure to bear on the government, demanding that it be less implacable towards the USSR. Curzon compromised further. After meeting with Krasin, he announced that he would not insist on literal satisfaction of Britain's claims. [50]

After the Curzon-Krasin meeting, the Soviet government moved to cut the ground from under the feet of the "hard-head" Conservatives. In the interests of peace it was willing to compromise on secondary issues not involving its sovereignty, and to sign a convention on fishing in northern waters until the question was settled at an international conference.

As for accusations that it was conducting anti-British propaganda in the east, these were once again rejected as unfounded. It was no secret that the Soviet Union was the natural ally and friend of all peoples fighting for their political and economic independence. [51] No interference in Soviet internal affairs would be tolerated, and Soviet representatives in Iran and Afghanistan would not be withdrawn. [52]

On the whole, the Soviet government's reply was received in Britain as positive. The organ of the British Communist Party, *The Workers' Weekly*, wrote that the Soviet government had not left "an atom or shred of excuse ... for the hypocrisy of the British junkers to cloak their attack." [53] Even the Conservative *Daily Express* saw "no reason why the affair should not now be settled swiftly and satisfactorily." [54] The General Council of the Trade Union Congress, indicating the conciliatory tone of the Soviet reply, called

for an extension of the trade agreement and full recognition of the Russian government. [55]

Protests against the ultimatum and demands that diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union be established at once were also forthcoming at this time from the Miners' and Steel Workers' Union and the Transport and General Workers' Union, despite the treachery of Ernest Bevin, who headed the latter. Labour and union leaders, falling in with the mood of the broad masses of workers, tried to cover their enmity towards the USSR with a sham of friendship.

During the concluding stage, the newly fledged Communist Party of Great Britain played an important role in preventing a break. It organized class-conscious, political demonstrations and meetings held in June in London and Glasgow.

The movement against a break in relations was so strong that Curzon was forced into further compromises to conceal his defeat. His answering note accepted the Soviet conditions with only slight changes. Once again he advanced the demand, already rejected several times, that damages be paid to British subjects. This demand had not even figured in the original text of the ultimatum. It was clearly the work of Urquhart, the magnates of the City, the Association of British Creditors in Russia, etc.

The Soviet reply spoke once again of ruins and cemeteries, of the terrible misfortunes suffered by the people of the Soviet republics as a result of the armed intervention and the Entente blockade. [56] As before, the responsibility for any break would rest entirely with the British government.

Despite Curzon's opposition, the Cabinet decided at a meeting on June 12 that the Soviet reply should be accepted as satisfactory. The next day Curzon was forced to send a note embracing the Soviet position on most points and calling an end to the correspondence. [57]

Thus it was the Soviet government that had the last word. But a number of British politicians, and the Conservative press (headed by *The Times*), tried to pretend that the ultimatum had been a success for Curzon, and resulted in a "diplomatic Tsushima" for the Soviet Union. [58] In fact Curzon, together with British and world reaction as a whole, had suffered a diplomatic defeat.

The Failure of Curzon's Plans to Create a United Anti-Soviet Bloc

The Curzon Ultimatum was intended to create a united capitalist front, which would impose an economic blockade on the USSR and undertake military intervention if conditions proved favorable. But the Soviet government, expressing the will of the people, took a firm position; it was ready to crush any attempt at renewed intervention. Furthermore, the working people of capitalist countries showed solidarity with the world's first socialist state. These factors caused the failure of the Curzon Ultimatum and averted the danger of military aggression.

The Curzon Ultimatum revealed new trends in international relations. The seriousness of the conflicts dividing the capitalist world now became apparent. Things became especially critical after the occupation of the Ruhr by France and Belgium, which intensified the struggles between France and Germany, and between Britain and France, for hegemony in Europe.

France, in the person of Poincaré (who was then both Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs) was preoccupied with the Ruhr problem. It gave no support to Curzon. Indeed, at the height of the crisis, it permitted the Russian Red Cross to send a commission to Marseille to prepare the repatriation of former Russian soldiers who had fought in the expeditionary corps in France during World War I. Chicherin immediately perceived the importance of this step. In a letter sent to the Central Committee on May 10, he noted that the French invitation meant Curzon's note was not part of an overall Entente plan.[59] France was also ready to sign an agreement in which it might profit from the crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations. A trade delegation was sent to Moscow for talks.[60]

The ultimatum also failed to win support from other capitalist countries. A number of American Senators and Congressmen, and also financiers (for example Irving T. Bush, chairman of the New York Chamber of Commerce), traveled to the Soviet Union to investigate the possibility of establishing trade.[61]

Italy, engaged in a struggle with France for mastery in Europe and the Mediterranean, also failed to support Curzon. It had no desire to sacrifice its trade agreement with the Soviet Union to British interests. In

fact, Italy was close to extending *de jure* recognition to the USSR.[62]

Germany preferred to hold to the Rapallo Treaty and broaden its economic ties with the Soviet Union. Brockdorff-Rantzau, once again appointed Ambassador to Moscow, recommended that Germany take advantage of the Anglo-Soviet conflict to do just that. He reported to Berlin: "In my opinion ... it would be a grave oversight not to begin talks at once, so as to make use of the present situation in Germany's political and economic interests."[63] D'Abernon, the British ambassador in Berlin, tried to turn Germany against the USSR, but with no success.

Meanwhile, the conflict with France made cooperation with the USSR even more attractive for German industrial and commercial capital. The talks Chicherin and Krasin had opened in Berlin in February of 1923, which were aimed at extending the Rapallo Treaty by a series of agreements on trade, transport, and problems involving concessions, moved ahead at full speed.[64] Preliminary talks were underway for a conference leading to a trade agreement. By the end of 1923, the Soviet Union had granted Germany sixteen concessions in trade, transport, and light industry, among them a major agreement on forestry. In 1923, Stinnes, A.E.G., and Deutsche Bank were negotiating to set up a consortium that would finance Soviet industrial orders in Germany.[65]

Sweden had reopened talks on a trade agreement. The USSR's relations with the Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland, had also improved. Talks on trade agreements were being conducted with Latvia and Estonia. A treaty on shipping in Lake Ladoga had been signed with Finland.

Early in June of 1923, the Danish parliament ratified a trade agreement with the USSR, and a Danish representative came to Moscow for the official exchange of instruments of ratification. Japan had also moved towards a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Agreement was reached on Japanese fishing in Russian territorial waters. There was an increase in the USSR's trade with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan.[66]

Curzon's plan to create a united anti-Soviet bloc for renewed military intervention had come to nought. Competition for Soviet markets and other economic factors were pushing the capitalists towards *de jure* recognition. The Soviet Union made skillful use of conflicts among capitalists

and prevented the imperialists from joining in a united front.

The Soviet government's unwavering policy of peace and friendship among nations had much to do with the failure of efforts to renew intervention. As it had in the years of the civil war and military intervention, the international proletariat gave every kind of support to the Soviet Union. The ultimatum brought to the attention of the whole world the increased strength of the Soviet Union and the willingness of its peoples to take up arms in defense of their socialist homeland. The ultimatum was aimed at undermining Soviet influence in other countries, particularly in the east. In fact it brought the Soviet government still greater authority and prestige all over the world. The Communist Party and the entire Soviet people had won an important new victory on the diplomatic front.

Chapter 7

Ramsay MacDonald's Government Is Forced to Recognize the USSR

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, revolutionary leader of the world proletariat, founder of the Communist Party and the Soviet government, creator of the Soviet Union's foreign policy and diplomacy, died on January 21, 1924, in the Moscow suburb of Gorki, at 6:50 in the evening. His death revived the imperialists' hopes of weakening the USSR or even restoring the capitalist order. But the Soviet people, carrying out Lenin's behests, continued with unabated energy their heroic struggle to build socialism in the USSR and strengthen its international position.

Soviet diplomacy was successful in bringing to life the foreign policy programme Lenin outlined for it. In his writings and speeches, Lenin brilliantly foresaw, and proved scientifically, that capitalist countries would have to establish normal economic and political relations with the Soviet Union. On November 20, 1922, in a speech to a plenary session of the Moscow Soviet, he predicted: "The road we are on is absolutely clearly and well defined, and has ensured us success in face of all the countries of the world, although some of them are still prepared to declare that they refuse to sit at one table with us. Nevertheless, economic relations, followed by diplomatic relations, are improving, must improve, and certainly will improve. Every country which resists this risks being late." [1]

European capitalist governments faced a postwar crisis difficult to overcome without establishing trade relations with Soviet Russia. They were forced to seek agreements. As Lenin put it: "There is a force more powerful than the wishes, the will and the decisions of any of the governments or classes that are hostile to us. That force is world general economic relations, which compel them to make contact with us." [2] The laws of social development understood by Lenin with such perspicacity, the power of world economic relations, the capitalists' economic interest in ties with the

USSR all this pushed them inevitably towards normalizing political relations as well.

The "breathing spell" the USSR had won in its relations with the capitalist world grew into a period of peaceful coexistence. This was the most significant feature of the international situation in 1924. Conditions were finally ripe for ending the Soviet government's isolation and establishing full diplomatic relations. Ultimatums, threats, and isolation of the USSR gave way to what might be called "isolation of the isolators." It was in 1924 that all the major nations of Europe extended recognition to the USSR.

The establishment of diplomatic relations benefited working people all over the world. Soviet orders created new jobs in capitalist countries and helped reduce unemployment.

The increase in the USSR's prestige and influence was most noticeable among peoples in colonial and dependent countries fighting for national liberation from the imperialist yoke. Their support, in turn, helped strengthen the USSR's international position.

The rapid growth of conflicts among the imperialists and competition for Soviet markets also helped the USSR to gain recognition. The hostile stance of the capitalists had never been firm; now it was undermined by internal conflicts and uneven economic and political development.

"De Jure Recognition Is Indispensable for Britain and for Us"

Having tested the stability of Soviet power and found it firm, the capitalist countries began, one after another, to establish diplomatic relations. One of the first to move towards legal recognition was Britain. The reasons were both international and domestic. The British bourgeoisie was vitally interested in Soviet markets and raw materials as an aid to overcoming industrial and commercial stagnation. It did not want to be left behind.

As noted in the 1924 annual report of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, the reason for Britain's recognizing the Soviet government *de jure* included "ever deepening contradictions between the Allies, the failure of attempts by various means—from intervention to conferences- to force Soviet Russia to pay up, and finally the economic crisis and the continual growth of unemployment in Britain itself." [3] For the Soviet Union, the rapprochement

was a practical step facilitating economic relations. In his speech to a conference of representatives of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade (January 7, 1924), Chicherin said: "*De jure* recognition is indispensable for the development of our trading techniques. Trade between Britain and the union republics is indispensable for Britain, and for us.... Our markets and our raw materials are indispensable for Britain." [4]

Before the war (1914-1918), Britain had been second only to Germany among Russia's trading partners. Extensive Anglo-Soviet trade would mean work for tens or hundreds of thousands in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, and other British cities. But trade could not develop successfully without *de jure* recognition, which would put economic relations on a firm legal footing.

Firms trading with the Soviet Union did not have the protection of diplomatic representatives. By contrast, countries that had both economic and diplomatic relations with the USSR, for example, Germany, did business under more favourable conditions.

Normalizing diplomatic relations was an important step towards closer economic ties between countries with different social and political systems. This is why in 1923 and early 1924 all of Britain's classes and parties, and the entire press, was caught up in the controversy on this question.

The opponents of recognition—the military-reactionary clique headed by Churchill, Curzon, General Alfred Knox, and others—continued to stand on their old arguments: the Soviet government had not paid its debts and had not returned the nationalized foreign property. Baldwin's Conservative government also held to this point of view. Those who favoured *de jure* recognition—industrialists and businessmen interested in the Soviet market—insisted that full diplomatic relations were urgently needed.

A number of Labourite and Liberal leaders, and petty-bourgeois pacifists—among them Neil MacLean, James O'Grady, Morel, and Kenworthy—actively supported recognition of the USSR. A letter from Morel to the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs quoted many representatives of British business in favour of this step.

Eric Geddes, president of the Federation of British Industries, also favored recognition. At that time, the federation included 169 associations and 1,719 firms, divided into twenty-two industrial groups, with a combined capital

of one billion pounds sterling. It was the largest organization of its kind in Britain, covering all the main industries: mechanical engineering, oil, railroads, textiles, shipbuilding, etc. George Balfour, Alfred Mond, and many other cabinet ministers and members of both Houses of Parliament were directors of companies belonging to the federation.[5] It controlled the activities of the British government, therefore its position on the question of recognition was extremely important.

It should further be noted that foreign and domestic policies were also dictated by the magnates of the City and the directors of the "Big Five" banks, who had more than a few representatives of their own in Parliament. Three of the "Big Five" banks belonged to the Federation of British Industries. A special meeting of the City's businessmen on December 31, 1923, declared that trade relations must be established with Russia.

Other groups calling for diplomatic relations with the USSR included the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce (an organization of British businessmen engaged in trade with Russia) and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, which represented the interests of industrialists and businessmen. As all these facts indicate, large segments of the business world were recommending that the government enter into diplomatic relations with the USSR, so that Britain's economy could profit from trade.

The efforts of the working people, guided by the British Communist Party, and of other progressive social elements were a powerful factor in winning *de jure* recognition. These groups saw the Soviet Union as the world's first socialist country, the foundation of the international revolutionary movement, and a guarantor of peace and democracy. The working people's struggle for recognition of the USSR was a struggle to improve their own legal and material position. It was a part of the proletariat's larger struggle for world peace. One of the main demands of the British Communist Party and working class in the Parliamentary elections of 1923 and 1924 was "Full recognition of the Russian workers' Republic and trade with Russia to be developed to the full."[6]

The fight for immediate and unconditional *de jure* recognition of the USSR became especially heated towards the end of 1923. A special resolution on this question was adopted at the fifth conference of the British Communist Party.

As a result of pressure from the mass workers' movement, and of right-wing Labour leaders' desire for power, the Labour Party's annual conference (June 26-29, 1923) adopted a resolution on foreign policy demanding recognition of the Soviet government *de jure.*[7] This was included in the Labour Party's campaign platform. In September, the Congress of British Trade Unions, attended by several hundred delegates representing four million members, unanimously called for full diplomatic recognition of the USSR. So many of Britain's working people wanted full recognition of the USSR that the reformist leaders of the trade unions and the Labour Party were forced to listen; by refusing to do the bidding of the working masses, they would have destroyed the Labour Party's influence among workers and exposed its right-wing leaders as capitalist henchmen.

The Question of Recognizing the USSR and the Parliamentary Elections

The struggle between supporters and opponents of establishing diplomatic relations with the USSR took on still greater scope as the Parliamentary elections of December, 1923, approached. During their time in power the Conservatives had taken an aggressive stance towards the USSR, exemplified by the Curzon Ultimatum. This policy was condemned by Britain's working people, who wanted the best possible relations with the Soviet Union. The leaders of the Labour Party were more flexible, using the workers' support of the USSR to win votes for themselves. An especially important plank in the Labourites' campaign platform called for renewing economic and political relations with the USSR, i.e. extending *de jure* recognition.

During the campaign, Ramsay MacDonald spoke repeatedly of the urgent need to recognize the Soviet government. But in fact the Labourites, after coming to power, continued the Conservatives' foreign policy. One Labourite leader, Philip Snowden, said that when his party took power it would undoubtedly disappoint those who hoped it would form a class government. Apparently he meant that the government would not belong to the working class but —as usual—to the bourgeoisie.

The demagoguery of right-wing Labourites, their talk about unconditional recognition, their adroit use of working people's sympathy with the USSR, their promises to

strengthen economic ties—all of these contributed much to Labour's success on December 6, 1923. The Conservatives went down to defeat. The results of the election showed that the Soviet policy of peace and cooperation among nations enjoyed enormous popularity and support among Britain's working people.

Following tradition, the King entrusted Ramsay MacDonald, the leader of the Labour Party, with forming a new cabinet. This was the first government of a new party in a country that for many decades had been ruled in turns by the Conservatives and Liberals.

Despite its name, the new government was essentially bourgeois. It defended the interests of big capital. The British bourgeoisie called it "the government of sweet reason." The Labour Party was made up of workers, but its leadership faithfully served the bourgeoisie. "The Labour Party," as Lenin described it, "is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organization of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers with the aid of the British Noskes and Scheidemanns." [8]

At noon on January 22, MacDonald, Henderson, Clynes, and Thomas were called before the King at Buckingham Palace. MacDonald declared his passionate loyalty to the crown, and said he "appreciated the great responsibility which was about to be placed on him." [9] The British Communist Party commented: "The royal and loyal Labour Government of His Majesty King George, are playing an active part, as the willing tool and accomplice of the exploiters." [10]

MacDonald was both Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary in the newly formed government. He had reached the summit of his political career. Arthur Henderson became Home Secretary. He had visited Russia on the eve of the October Revolution to persuade the provisional government to fight on till victory. He also declared his party's programme to be "the best bulwark to violent upheaval and class war." [11] Philip Snowden, who started out as a customs and excise clerk but had become a millionaire, was a man trusted in the City. He became Chancellor of the Exchequer. James Henry Thomas, formerly general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, eventually

became Secretary of State for Employment. The bourgeoisie had absolute confidence in Thomas, who had opposed class battles and strikes as tools of political struggle. He meant to preserve the capitalist social order.

The formation of the first Labour government was a manoeuvre by the bourgeoisie to alleviate the class struggle in England. MacDonald's government was "a devoted servant of His Majesty the King, of the Empire of the capitalists, independent of Socialism, independent of the Labour movement, and dependent upon the dominant class only." [12]

Immediately after the elections, the European press began to say that Britain would recognize the Soviet government at once, since right-wing Labourites were eager to reap the advantages of priority.

"The question of Britain's recognizing the USSR has been settled by the outcome of the Parliamentary elections," said the 1924 annual report of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. [13] The *Daily Herald,* which after Labour's victory became its semi-official organ, wrote that even in the most hostile circles it was accepted as certain that the Soviet government would be recognized *de jure.* Nonetheless, Conservative politicians and the press strove either to block recognition or, failing that, to impose as preliminary conditions payment of the tsarist government's debts and compensation for nationalized property. MacDonald "forgot" his campaign promise to extend unconditional recognition to the USSR.

Arguments over recognition, conditional or unconditional (that is, over whether to conduct talks with the Soviet government about debts and the nationalized property of foreigners before or after recognition), delayed the establishment of diplomatic relations. MacDonald could not refuse to recognize the USSR, but he dragged his feet. The indignation that breaking his campaign promise outright would have caused among Britain's working class would have brought down the Labour government. The authority of the British Labourites and pacifists was simply a reflection of the Soviet Union's prestige among the working masses.

Still, it was no secret from anyone that MacDonald was violently hostile to the Soviet system. This was acknowledged even in the official historiography of the Labour Party. Herbert Tracey, editor of the three-volume *Book of the Labour Party,* wrote that there was "no more sincere opponent of the methods of the Soviet system than he [MacDonald—

F. V.]—as his writings and speeches since the end of the War have proved." [14] MacDonald openly declared that diplomatic relations did not in any way imply cooperation. He saw them as nothing more than the beginning of official communication.

The right-wing Labourites' pacifist declarations did not mean they really wanted peace in Europe. The bourgeoisie needed to move from its policy of frontal attack to one of compromise, from shameless imperialism to the fig leaf of pacifism.

The British bourgeoisie put the Labour government in power hoping it would manage to impose, under some guise or other, conditions that would keep the Soviet system from getting stronger. This is why on January 12, after the election victory but before the new government was formed, MacDonald sent a letter to the USSR's representative in Britain asking that the Soviet government, even before *de jure* recognition, declare itself willing in principle to consider private claims and appoint a commission for immediate discussion of this question. [15]

The Soviet government, as it had repeatedly done in the past, rejected any attempt by Britain to conduct talks prior to establishing diplomatic relations. It was willing to consider all disputed questions immediately after recognition.

The Labour government was compelled to keep its principal campaign promise and recognize the Soviet government. In a formal meeting held in the Albert Hall to celebrate his party's victory, MacDonald declared that diplomatic relations must be established with the USSR. In the same speech, however, he declared: "We would be a Labour Government putting into operation the very principles that have become historical in the operations of our Foreign Office." [16]

Neither in domestic nor in foreign policy did MacDonald disappoint his imperialist masters. He followed in the footsteps of the Conservatives and Liberals. On coming to power, he adhered strictly to the principle of continuity in foreign policy. Little changed at the Foreign Office. Its officials (especially the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, a jealous guardian of continuity) and British's diplomatic representatives abroad, the great majority of whom were extremely anti-Soviet, all remained in place.

Moreover, the officials and experts of the Foreign Office pointed out to the new government that there were "tech-

nical difficulties" in the way of recognizing the Soviet government without preliminary conditions. It was unclear whether Russia's old treaties remained in effect and what stance the Soviet government would take on the debts question. Another obstacle was that Russia's British creditors insisted on an agreement (if only on general principles) for the compensation of their losses. They threatened to refuse credits to the USSR if this were not done.

By promising credits, British financiers were hoping to break the monopoly on foreign trade. In other words, they wanted to have another try at economic intervention. The Soviet government refused to accept any conditions for *de jure* recognition.

Britain's Working People Have Their Say

The first reports in the Conservative and Liberal press that MacDonald's government was temporizing on the question of diplomatic relations with the USSR caused indignation among Britain's working people. The British Communist Party conducted a large-scale campaign for immediate and unconditional recognition. Harry Pollitt, a member of the Party's Central Committee, said in an interview with a *Pravda* correspondent: "*The Communist Party of Great Britain has played a considerable role in the struggle for recognition.* There has been not one election campaign, whether Parliamentary or municipal, not one congress, not one conference of trade unionists or the unemployed, at which British Communists have not raised the question of recognizing Soviet Russia." [17]

Many progressive organizations and leaders of the workers' movement joined their voices to that of the British Communist Party. All over Britain resolutions were adopted protesting against delays in recognizing the USSR. On January 25, the National Council of the Independent Labour Party issued a statement demanding immediate and unconditional recognition. On January 29, a letter from Neil MacLean, a Labour leader in Parliament, appeared in the *Daily Herald*. MacLean had consistently supported recognition. Now he asked: "What is the nonsense about inevitable delays and preliminary formalities and so on before the Russian Government can be recognised?" [18]

British workers made it quite clear to MacDonald that they would not tolerate delays. The London municipal coun-

cil held a meeting of protest. Afterwards, a workers' delegation was sent to MacDonald with a warning: if the Labour government did not recognize the USSR in the near future, the London Council of Trade Unions would bring a million and a half workers out onto the streets to voice their dissatisfaction. [19]

MacDonald was forced to give in. On February 1, 1924, Britain established full diplomatic relations with the USSR.

The note Hodgson delivered in Moscow said that Britain recognized "the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics as the *de jure* rulers of those territories of the old Russian Empire which acknowledge their authority." [20] But such a formulation cast doubts on the sovereign rights of the Soviet government. It left the door open for recognition of other, anti-Soviet governments that might be formed in the territories of the old Russian empire. The note stated further that recognition of the Soviet government would "automatically bring into force all the treaties concluded between the two countries previous to the Russian Revolution, except where these have been denounced or have otherwise juridically lapsed." [21] Thus the note proposed to restore all the treaties the tsarist and provisional governments had with Britain and all other obligations, including debts.

Considerable attention was given to settling the claims of governments and citizens on both sides. The note proposed that suspicions about "propaganda" be eliminated. The Soviet government was asked to send representatives to London to discuss these problems and to lay the foundations for a general agreement.

The British government appointed a *chargé d'affaires* preliminary to appointing an ambassador. It was prepared to receive a Soviet *chargé* in London. MacDonald hoped to use the question of ambassadors to exert pressure to bear on the Soviet government, especially regarding debts.

Soviet diplomacy welcomed the normalization of relations with Britain, but was unwilling to countenance any infringement on the USSR's interests. It thus gave its own interpretation of the note, which the British were forced either to accept or to deny. In its reply, dated February 8, 1924, the Soviet government insisted that its "authority extends throughout the territories of the Former Russian Empire, with the exception of those which have been severed with the consent of the Soviet Government and in which independent states have been constituted." [22] The

British side was compelled to agree to this important proposition upholding the sovereignty of the USSR.

The Soviet government was willing to reach an agreement with Britain on replacing former treaties that had been denounced or had juridically lapsed as the result of wartime or postwar events. But it would not sanction predatory treaties such as the 1907 Anglo-Russian Agreement on the Division of Persia, or the treaties on China, Turkey, etc.

In keeping with a resolution of the Second Congress of Soviets, the government reaffirmed its readiness to discuss all questions arising directly or indirectly from the act of recognition. At the same time it declared that mutual noninterference in internal affairs was essential for friendly relations.[23] The Soviet government also appointed a *chargé d'affaires* in London.

The establishment of diplomatic relations was "the result of the united efforts of the peace-loving policies of the Soviet government, under the guidance of Lenin, and the strongly expressed and persistent will of the English people ... in a form worthy of the great peoples of both countries and constituting a foundation for their friendly cooperation."[24]

De jure recognition was also significant in the realm of international law. Britain had acknowledged that it was possible for countries with different social systems—socialism and capitalism—to coexist peacefully. This created favorable conditions for large-scale cooperation in business. *De jure* recognition also laid the legal foundation for more successful development of trade (recognizing the monopoly on foreign trade) and the trade and credit agreements this would require. Anglo-Soviet trade and the whole complex of economic relations were put on a firm legal footing, an unshakable economic and juridical basis that betokened improved political relations. *De jure* recognition constituted the legislative groundwork for the inviolability of Soviet gold, monies, securities, and goods.

The establishment of diplomatic relations with Britain opened the way for Soviet participation in international conferences, since the Soviet government was now recognized as a full-fledged subject of international law.

The years-long struggle of the Soviet government for peace and diplomatic relations with Britain had ended in triumph. Once again, Soviet foreign policy had made skill-

ful use of the radical contradictions within the capitalist camp. The capitalist policy of isolation was defeated by the growing political, economic, and military might of the USSR, whose participation had become essential for the solution of important international problems.

Other Countries Move to Recognize the USSR De Jure

The establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Britain was an important step towards stabilizing the economic and political situation in Europe and throughout the world. It influenced the positions of other capitalist powers.

Italy hastened to follow Britain in recognizing the USSR. The economic crisis of 1919-1920 had pushed Italy to the edge of bankruptcy. The country needed Soviet grain, oil, and coal. Negotiations had opened as early as September 10, 1923, but as they continued Italy, eager to reap as many benefits as possible from being the first to extend recognition, demanded more and more of the USSR. The Soviet government proposed compromises that would benefit both sides. On February 7, 1924, Italy recognized the USSR *de jure* and formalized an agreement on trade and navigation.

As Mikhail Kalinin commented, recognition by Britain and Italy indicated the other European powers would soon follow suit.[25] Italy exchanged ambassadors with the USSR; thus far Britain had appointed only a *chargé d'affaires*.

Other countries now moved to recognize the USSR. One of the first was Norway. The newspaper *Arbeiderbladet* wrote that Britain's recognition of the USSR had been like a bomb going off in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On February 15, after discussions and meetings of the cabinet, the Norwegian government sent a note to Aleksandra Kollontai, the USSR's plenipotentiary representative, extending *de facto* and *de jure* recognition to the Soviet government.[26]

On February 25, the Austrian government announced that it, too, would establish diplomatic relations with the USSR. Austria's representative in Moscow was to be replaced by a diplomatic mission.[27]

On March 8, the Greek government established full diplomatic and consular relations with the USSR. Greece was the first Balkan country to extend *de jure* recognition.[28]

Sweden's interest in trade with the Soviet Union was expressed in the Riksdag, in commercial and industrial circles, and among the public. Sweden was the only Scandinavian country that did not have an agreement with the USSR. The Swedish government had no choice but to extend *de jure* recognition, which it did on March 15.[29] A trade agreement between the two countries was concluded the same day.

On June 18, Soviet-Danish negotiations ended with Denmark's *de jure* recognition of the Soviet government.[30]

Even at this time, the USSR's efforts to normalize its relations with capitalist countries met with fierce resistance from militant reactionary parties, the imperialist bourgeoisie, and others. An example can be seen in the course of negotiations with China. Talks were begun in Peking in March of 1923, but dragged on for a whole year because of resistance from the imperialist circles.

On March 14, 1924, the Peking government agreed in principle to normalize its relations with the USSR. Having established diplomatic relations with Britain and other countries, it was forced to take this step by pressure from the Chinese Communist Party, from public organizations, universities, the press, chambers of commerce, and members of parliament, and especially from Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the Kuomintang (at this time a progressive party), who had created a revolutionary government in Canton. But France and the USA opposed the agreement. The USA sent a threatening note; Chinese recognition of the USSR, it said, might lead to international complications. The Chinese government then refused to sign a treaty with the USSR, touching off a storm of protest against the USA's violation of Chinese sovereignty. The movement to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR became identified with anti-imperialism in China. On May 31, despite fresh protests from France and the USA, the Chinese and Soviet governments signed an Agreement on General Principles for Settling Disputes Between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Chinese Republic.[31] Normal diplomatic and consular relations were resumed. For the first time China had concluded an agreement with another country on the basis of equality. *Pravda* wrote: "This is an historic event for the liberation movement among the peoples of the Orient."[32]

Tsarist Russia had concluded with other countries ineq-

nitable treaties affecting Chinese interests. The Soviet government, faithful to Lenin's principles regarding national rights, annulled these. It was agreed that the question of the Chinese Eastern Railway should be settled in the near future at a conference that would include no third parties. The treaty with the USSR was of great importance for the Chinese people's struggle for national liberation, and thereby helped establish peace in the Orient. [33]

The USSR's policy of equality, friendship, and effective aid for China was in striking contrast to the imperialist countries' policy of colonial enslavement. The Soviet-Chinese treaty received an enthusiastic welcome in China. The *Peking Leader* wrote: "Never before has China concluded with a foreign power an agreement that so fully embodies the principles of equality and reciprocity." [34]

The second session of the USSR's Central Executive Committee adopted a resolution, stressing "the importance for the USSR of developing and deepening its friendship with the peoples of the Orient," and especially with the Chinese people. [35]

Negotiations between the USSR and Albania began in the summer of 1924. On July 4, the Albanian government announced that it was establishing diplomatic relations with the USSR. [36]

On August 4, Mexico extended *de jure* recognition to the USSR. It was the first country in the new world to do so. [37]

The 13th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), held in May of 1924, declared its approval of "the international policies being pursued under the direction of the Central Committee, which have led to *de jure* recognition of the USSR by a number of major bourgeois countries." [38]

By October of 1924, the only major capitalist countries that had not extended *de jure* recognition were France, the USA, and Japan. Soviet diplomacy, and Lenin himself, placed great importance on improved relations with France. "Any rapprochement with France," Lenin said, "is something we very much desire, especially in view of the fact that Russia's commercial interests imperatively demand closer relations with this strong continental power." [39]

In France itself, a fierce struggle was being waged between supporters and opponents of recognition. The French Communist Party suggested that the working people force the government to grant recognition at once. In issue after

issue, *L'Humanité* repeated the call: "We will win peace with Soviet Russia! All the great powers have recognized the USSR *de jure*. France will be the last." The Communist Party strove to make workers and peasants understand the importance of normal Franco-Soviet relations.

It was only on October 28, 1924, that Edouard Herriot's government recognized the USSR *de jure* as "the government of the territories of the Former Russian Empire, wherever its authority is acknowledged." [40] Like Britain, France resorted to this formula in the hope that certain territories, in particular Georgia, might still be torn away from the USSR.

Normalizing relations with Japan was of great importance for the Soviet Union. The Japan interventionists had been defeated and driven out of the Far East in October of 1922. But northern Sakhalin was still held by Japanese troops, and Japan was exporting coal and timber from this area.

Japanese politicians wanted the USSR to assume the debts of the tsarist and provisional governments and to hand over northern Sakhalin by "sale" or granting concessions. The Soviet government firmly refused to strike any such bargain. On January 20, 1925, after long and difficult negotiations, a convention restoring diplomatic and consular relations was signed. It called for Japan to evacuate northern Sakhalin by May 15, 1925.

The USA stubbornly resisted establishing diplomatic relations with the USSR, even though 22 capitalist countries had already done so. In a message to Congress on December 6, 1923, President Coolidge declared: "Our Government does not propose ... to enter into relations with another regime which refuses to recognize the sanctity of international obligations." [41] The American imperialists were ignoring the will of the working masses and the USA's own economic interests. They remained in "splendid isolation," almost the last to recognize the USSR.

* * *

The establishment of diplomatic relations with the capitalist countries was an important success for Soviet foreign policy—a policy of peace and friendship among nations. By the beginning of 1925, the Soviet Union had diplomatic relations with 22 capitalist countries.

The "breathing spell" the USSR had won now extended into a long period of coexistence and cooperation by countries with different social systems.

Chapter 8

Open Attacks from the British Diehards

The Signing of Political and Trade Agreements

The establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Britain brought about an improvement in the political and economic relations between the two countries. This improvement resulted from the British-Soviet negotiations that took place in London between April 14 and August 12, 1924 which paved the way for the conclusion of political and trade agreements.

The Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the Soviet Government attached great importance to these negotiations with Britain. The Politburo of the RCP(B) Central Committee adopted a special resolution regarding this matter that was duly ratified by a Plenary Meeting of the CC. [1]

The Soviet delegation at these negotiations included Maxim Litvinov, A. F. Radchenko, members of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and representatives of the more important commissariats and trade unions. From the outset the negotiations with the British delegation led by the Member of Parliament and Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Ponsonby were fraught with difficulties because they were essentially a continuation of the struggle between the supporters and opponents of improved relations between the USSR and Britain.

Even before the commencement of these British-Soviet negotiations monopolists from the Federation of British Industries and also bankers from London Bank, Barclays Bank and Lloyds Bank drew up and sent to Ramsay MacDonald a letter and memorandum containing instructions from the ruling classes as to what ought to be sought from the Soviet Government.

These documents represented little other than a plan for the restoration of capitalism in Soviet Russia by re-estab-

lishing private ownership of the means of production, paying off the debts incurred by former Russian governments, the introduction of special rights for foreigners and the abolition of the state's monopoly of foreign trade, a plan resurrected from as far back as the time of the Genoa Conference (1922).

No appreciable progress was achieved with regard to the question of debts, nationalized property, and loans to the USSR. The conference soon found itself in deadlock as a result of the intransigence of the British delegation. A successful outcome of these British-Soviet negotiations was impeded by monopolists from the USA, who were afraid lest a precedent be set with regard to the repudiation of debts. The arrival of the US Secretary of State, Charles Evan Hughes, in first London and then Berlin, John Morgan's four visits to London in quick succession, intrigues on the part of French reactionaries, and an attack, on May 3, against the Soviet Trade Delegation by the Berlin police at the instigation of the parties of the Right were directed towards one goal and one goal only—undermining these British-Soviet negotiations.

The forces of reaction in Britain also sought to disrupt them. They did not succeed in doing so conclusively, but on August 6, after a stormy meeting of a plenary session of the Conference that lasted 27 hours, Ponsonby, the British representative, declared that no agreement could be signed and that negotiations and all agreements had ended in failure. [2]

The breaking-off of these negotiations drew a wave of protest from the British working people. Alarm spread through plants and factories and workers at many enterprises stopped work, demanding that the Labour leaders explain why the MacDonald Government had broken off negotiations with the USSR. Many British industrialists and trading companies also wanted an answer to this question, as was made clear by their representatives in Parliament—the Labour members Albert Purcell and Morel, and Liberals Lloyd George and Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy. [3] In the wake of this protest, on August 6, it was decided at a specially convened emergency session of the Labour Party Parliamentary Committee, to which MacDonald was invited at short notice, that the negotiations would be continued.

During the special debates held in the British Parliament, most of the Liberals and Labour members came out

in favor of signing British-Soviet agreements. The Conservatives found themselves in a minority. On August 8, 1924 political and trade agreements were signed. The articles in the political agreement concerned the abrogation of part of former agreements, and the review and amendment of some of them. The two sides declared that they would not intervene in each other's internal affairs.[4] The trade agreement signed on the same day replaced the British-Soviet trade agreement of March 16, 1921 and laid the foundations for relations between both parties based on the principles of most-favoured-nation treatment. The agreement also incorporated Britain's recognition of the immutable principle of Soviet trade—the state's monopoly of all foreign trade.

These agreements of 1924 marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of political and economic relations between the USSR and Great Britain, laid down in accordance with legal norms.

The Conservatives' Anti-Soviet Campaign Aimed at the Abrogation of the British-Soviet Agreements

The British-Soviet agreements were subjected to savage attacks by the forces of reaction throughout the capitalist world. In Britain ratification of these agreements was attacked by representatives by the militant reactionary clique in the Conservative Party (Winston Churchill, Austen Chamberlain, Stanley Baldwin, William Joynson-Hicks) and Liberals Asquith, Viscount Runciman, John Simon and others. Attacks from city businessmen and monopolists from the Federation of British Industries, the Association of British Creditors in Russia and certain directors from the Big Five among the London banks were particularly violent on account of the fact that the agreements made no provision for compensation for loans granted to the tsarist government and the property of foreigners in Russia which had been nationalized.

Yet many British industrialists and traders welcomed the conclusion of these agreements, regarding them as an important contribution towards improving the state of the British economy. The Anglo-Russian Chamber of Commerce and Allan Smith, President of the National Federation of Manufacturers, and many others worked hard to ensure that the agreements be ratified.[5]

Rank-and-file members of the Labour and Liberal Parties and trade unions, members of the Independent Labour Party, the Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee (as the Hands Off Soviet Russia! committee came to be known after 1924) and many others besides were demanding ratification of the British-Soviet agreements.

The struggle between these two trends in British foreign policy with regard to the USSR was particularly tense at the time of the parliamentary election of the autumn of 1924. The campaign waged by British reactionaries against the British-Soviet agreements was also a campaign to bring down MacDonald's government since a section of the British bourgeoisie was opposed to many aspects of the Labour leaders' foreign and domestic policy, and alarmed at the growing power of the labour movement in the country.

Admittedly the combined forces of the Liberals and Conservatives could not muster the resolve to defeat the MacDonald government over the issue of the British-Soviet agreements, since the latter were too popular in Britain at the time. Instead they brought it down in connection with the "Campbell affair", Campbell being one of the leaders of the British Communist Party and temporary editor of the newspaper *Workers' Weekly*. Campbell put out anti-militarist and anti-imperialist propaganda, called on soldiers not to shoot at striking workers or put pressure on the national liberation movement.[6] Conservative reactionaries viewed this appeal to the troops as an attempt to erode the very foundations of British military might, as a call "to revolt" and demanded that Campbell be arrested. MacDonald approved his arrest and the institution of legal proceedings against him. Yet the provocative action of the Labour government gave rise to widespread protest in the rank-and-file of the Labour party, the trade unions and elsewhere. MacDonald hurried to put an end to the "Campbell affair". Then the ruling circles, the Liberals and Conservatives demanded that the affair be investigated. When it was being discussed in Parliament MacDonald's Government was defeated and then resigned. There is no doubt but that the "Campbell affair" was merely a pretext for the resignation of MacDonald's government. The real reason was the series of major setbacks suffered by that government in both foreign and home policy and in particular the failure of its attempts to renew economic intervention directed against the USSR.

In an attempt to emerge victorious at the parliamentary elections and to discredit the British-Soviet agreements the Conservatives organized a major act of provocation.

A few days before the elections a crude piece of anti-Soviet falsification appeared in the British reactionary press, in particular in the *Daily Mail*—the so-called "Comintern Letter." The *Daily Mail* wrote about a "communist conspiracy" in Britain that Scortland Yard was supposed to have exposed, as allegedly borne out by the "Comintern Letter." Later it was reliably established that this document had been compiled in one of the White Guard centers for the propagation of anti-Soviet falsifications in Berlin organized by Baron Uexkuell, a White Guard from the Baltic region. The authors of the letter had been White emigrés Bemhardt, Zhemchuzhnikov, and Gumashkin,[7] who had close ties with imperial German intelligence led by Colonel Walter Nicolai. The "document" had been sold to the Foreign Office by Baron Uexkuell through the mediation of the international spy George Bell in the employ of the oil magnate Henri Deterding.[8] A representative of the Foreign Office had made the letter available to the *Daily Mail* which had then proceeded to publish it. This crudely forged document contained "instructions" from the Comintern to the Communist Party of Great Britain as to how the British bourgeois government should be overthrown and how a propaganda campaign calling for the ratification of the British-Soviet agreement of 1924 should be waged. The military section of the Communist Party of Great Britain was called upon to train specialists, "future commanders of the British Red Army." This forged letter was "signed" by the Chairman of the Presidium of the Comintern's Executive Committee and member of the Presidium Arthur McManus and the Committee's secretary Otto Kuusinen.

Even in his first analysis of the "Comintern Letter" the USSR Chargé d'Affaires in Britain pointed out convincingly in his note to MacDonald, that the Foreign Office had fallen prey to a trick on the part of enemies of the USSR who clearly knew nothing about the organization of the Comintern. The Comintern had never borne the name "The Third Communist International" as maintained in the forgery for the very simple reason that no First or Second Communist International had ever existed.[9]

The signatures on the forgery also turned out to be a

crude falsification: the letter was signed by the "Chairman of the Presidium of the Communist International's Executive Committee" at a time when the man at the head of this organization would always have signed himself simply "Chairman of the Executive Committee." The named member of the Presidium, McManus was indeed a member of the Comintern Executive Committee, who however always signed himself A. McManus or Arthur McManus, rather than simply McManus. The secretary of the Comintern Executive Committee at the time was Vasil Kolarov. [10]

The whole content of this forgery was termed by the Soviet government a collection of ridiculous, shameless falsifications aimed at disrupting Anglo-Soviet agreements and destroying the friendly relations between the two countries that were gradually taking shape. [11]

The forgery had been aimed at frightening petty-bourgeois voters with the "Red danger" and so force them to vote for the Conservatives who were conducting a wide-scale anti-Soviet propaganda campaign and criticizing the agreements that had been drawn up with the USSR. MacDonald had every reason to declare that the letter was a forgery. He not only failed, however, to do this, but in essence accepted the letter as genuine.

Among Foreign Office documents there is to be found a file on the "Comintern Letter" drawn up by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Eyre Crowe, and other members of that ministry. There it is recorded that "The letter was brought to the Permanent Under-Secretary of State on the 10th October [*by whom* the report naturally admits no mention.—*Volkov.*] in the form of a copy of the original document..." Eyre Crowe, however, without bothering to investigate the authenticity of this document noted: "The Russian letter was received and discussed at a recent meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain," [12] while voicing no doubts as to its authenticity. On October 15th, Eyre Crowe gave instructions to Foreign Office officials to proceed immediately with preparation of a protest note to the Soviet Government and to provide full information on this development to the British press.

The following day Eyre Crowe sent the letter to MacDonald who gave instructions for the drafting of a protest note to the USSR. "It must," he stressed, "be so well-founded and important that it carries conviction and guilt." [13] (Later

MacDonald maintained that Foreign Office officials had sent the note to the USSR without informing him of their action.)

The draft for the protest note to the Soviet Government was carefully edited by Eyre Crowe and sent to MacDonald. According to Foreign Office records: "The original draft ... had been entirely revised and largely rewritten by the Prime Minister in his own hand." [14] This had apparently made it sterner and more adamant in tone and it was then sent back to Eyre Crowe for final editing. The text was subsequently approved by MacDonald. On October 24 John Gregory, chief of the Northern Department in the Foreign Office (who was later exposed as a speculator on the Stock Exchange) sent a note to the USSR Chargé d'Affaires in Britain that was full of blatant falsifications and fabrications on the subject of the "Comintern Letter". Enclosed with MacDonald's note was a copy of the notorious forgery. MacDonald also attempted to identify the activities of the Soviet Government with those of the Comintern.

On October 25, the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Britain sent a Note addressed personally to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary MacDonald containing a categorical denial of the groundless accusations directed at the Soviet Government. In addition, on the instruction of the Soviet Government another Note dated October 27 was sent, in which the "Comintern Letter" was termed a forgery. The Soviet Government insisted that appropriate apologies should be made over this question and that the guilty parties should be duly punished.

So as to dispel any doubts as to the false nature of the above-mentioned document the Soviet Government insisted relentlessly that there should be an impartial investigation by a third party to establish that the "Comintern Letter" dated September 15 had been a forgery. [15]

MacDonald not only refused to accept this proposal by the Soviet Government for a third-party investigation but even declined to accept the Note and gave instructions for it to be returned to the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires. The Note was sent to MacDonald three times by the Soviet representative in London and three times he returned it. The Chargé d'Affaires insisted on a private meeting with MacDonald, however, no concessions were made by either party. [16] So as to make clear the true state of affairs to the British public the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires published his government's Note in the British press.

Through his silence over the true origins of the "Letter" and his complicity in its publication, MacDonald provided the Conservatives with a weapon for disrupting the British-Soviet agreements and made it easier for the Conservatives to accuse the Soviet Government of "interfering in Britain's internal affairs," thus enhancing their chances for a return to power. Even the official British Committee of Inquiry under MacDonald, set up by the Labour Government specially to establish the authenticity of the "Letter," issued a communiqué on November 4th in the following terms: "...after hearing the Department concerned [the committee members.—*Volkov.*] find it impossible on the evidence before them to come to a positive conclusion on the subject. The original letter has not been produced or seen by any Government Department and action was taken on what was not claimed to be more than a copy. Unfortunately in the short time available, the committee found it impossible to obtain evidence throwing further light on the matter." [17]

The problem was of course not the insufficient time available for the investigation but the absence of the original, any genuine "original" of the "Letter." The Committee was thus admitting the existence of a forgery. It is no coincidence that even Stanley Baldwin and Austen Chamberlain said that no member of the British Parliament had seen the original of the "Comintern Letter." [18] Indeed even MacDonald himself soon abandoned this version of the story. During a private meeting with the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Britain on November 2nd the Labour Prime Minister gave the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires to understand that although he regarded the letter to be a forgery he was of the opinion that the forgery had not been perpetrated in Britain. [19]

On December 15, 1924 in a speech in the House of Commons MacDonald once again admitted openly that the authenticity of the "Comintern Letter" had not been proved. Later in 1925, MacDonald, when asked at a meeting in Northumberland if the "Letter" had been authentic, replied that it had not and that noone was more aware of this than the Conservative Party. [20]

A delegation of the General Council of British Trade Unions (which consisted of, among others, Albert Purcell, Ben Tillett, John Bromley and Herbert Smith) which visited the USSR in the autumn of 1924, made a special investigation of the "Letter" 's authenticity. The delegation from the

General Council reached a unanimous conclusion to the effect that the alleged "document" had been a forgery, that no proof to the contrary could be made available, and that this alone explained why the Russian proposal for a third-party investigation had been rejected.[21] The report drawn up by the special committee from the General Council of Trades Unions was published in the British press in May 1925.[22]

The Defeat of the Labour Party at the Elections

The parliamentary elections held on October 29 dealt the Labour Party a major defeat: they lost 40 seats. The Labour leader John Clynes maintained that MacDonald's refusal to expose the blatant forgery had led to the Party's defeat at the elections. In November Stanley Baldwin formed a Conservative government. Austen Chamberlain was made Foreign Secretary, Winston Churchill Chancellor of the Exchequer and Joynson-Hicks was put in charge of the Home Office.

Baldwin's Government adopted from the outset an unashamedly hostile policy towards the Soviet state. The Foreign Office presented the government with its views on the course of British policy towards the USSR. It was argued that three possible courses appeared to be open to the government: "(1) To protest, and to press their protest to its logical conclusion, which must inevitably lead to a fresh rupture of diplomatic relations, or

"2) To protest but not press the point home;

"3) To disengage themselves from the controversy bequeathed to them by the late administration, and ignore the Soviet government as much and as long as this position is tenable."[23]

At the same time the document also listed arguments against breaking off relations with the USSR, and to be precise:

'a) That it will deprive this country of the relatively small commercial benefits which it derives from the Trade Agreement;

"b) ...That the Soviet Government would be able to set off against a present rupture with us the rapprochement which they have succeeded in making toward M. Herriot's Government;

"c) That although a rupture would bring British Policy into line with that of the United States, it is unlikely that it would be reached with expressed approbation in European countries;

"d) That whilst it is notoriously easy to sever diplomatic relations, equally notorious is the difficulty in finding suitable means of resuming diplomatic relations when desired;

"e) That a rupture of relations is a weapon which can only be used once; it is therefore desirable that it should be reserved for an occasion when it is likely to produce the maximum effect upon the Soviet Government." [24]

The arguments put forward by the Foreign Office could be summarized as a suggestion that the time was not yet ripe for breaking off diplomatic relations with the USSR. Similarly if this were to happen at that point in time, action of this kind would not be as detrimental as hoped to the Soviet side. Later on recommendations were made to the government not to engage in polemics regarding the authenticity of the "Comintern Letter", but at the same time it was suggested that the Foreign Secretary or Prime Minister would do well to make a special announcement in Parliament on the authenticity of the document. [25]

The Baldwin Government adopted a compromise solution, not to go as far as breaking off relations with the USSR for the time being, but to prepare such a step. In a Note sent to the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in London on November 21st, Austen Chamberlain rejected the Soviet Government's Notes exposing the "Letter" as a forgery and, without entering into polemics. he merely reiterated the authenticity of that document. The British Government also rejected the proposal for a third-party investigation of the "Comintern Letter".

In another Note sent to the Soviet Government on the same day, Austen Chamberlain announced that the British Government was "unable to recommend ... to the consideration of Parliament or submit ... for ... ratification" the British-Soviet agreements negotiated on August 8, 1924. [26] The agreements as a result did not take effect.

The base provocation carried out by the British Conservatives and their labour accomplices against the USSR ended however in complete failure. The forces of reaction in Britain which had been aiming at reducing to naught the British-Soviet agreements were unable to bring about a

severance of diplomatic relations between Britain and the USSR. Yet the government of Baldwin and Chamberlain had made a significant stride in this direction.

Two Trends in British Policy Towards the USSR

The electoral victory of the Conservative Party, which was the most reactionary section of the British ruling classes the landed aristocracy and powerful trading and finance capital—also meant a victory for the most chauvinistic and aggressive elements in British political affairs.

Two main groups should be singled out from all those which go to make up the British ruling classes that determined the Conservatives' policy in relation to the USSR. The first, which was in favor of repeating armed intervention against the USSR, included the landowners working in collaboration with capitalist industrialists, the financial oligarchy dominating the British economy and representatives of the colonial bourgeoisie.

The decisive role within this group was that played by the Big Five of the giant British banks, which controlled up to 80 per cent of capital. Many British banks, including the London Bank, Midland Bank and Barclays Bank had given credit to the tsarist government and were still endeavoring to tie the hands of Soviet Russia by means of financial enslavement and to retrieve from the new Soviet Government the money which had not been repaid.

Within Britain leading oil companies were working in close collaboration with the banking capital which before the revolution of 1917 had controlled large numbers of oil fields in Baku, Grozny, Maikop and elsewhere. The largest of these companies was the Anglo-Dutch oil company Royal Dutch Shell headed by Henry Deterding, one of the world's most powerful oil magnates, who owned shares in the oil fields of Baku and Grozny. He headed the Association of British Creditors in Russia, all of whom dreamt of retrieving the debts from the USSR and of regaining ownership of the enterprises that had been nationalized after the revolution. This group of creditors included the owners of armaments factories with a vested interest in a war against the USSR, who had already made thousands of millions of profit out of the blood of the peoples. The grandiose Nobel Trust which had dominated the production of explosives,

the Vickers trust, headed by Basil Zaharoff, producing weapons and the trust engaged in the production of firearms also played a crucial role in shaping British foreign policy.

In the mid-20s the diehards among the Conservatives were openly advocating the imperialist plans of the British financial oligarchy, the colonial bourgeoisie and the landed aristocracy both in Parliament and other government institutions. Standing out among them as the most violent opponents of the USSR were Winston Churchill, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Curzon, the Lord President of the Council, Leopold Amery, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Birkenhead, Minister for India (known as Strangler of the Irish Revolution), and Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks, a prominent reactionary. The irreconcilable enemies of the USSR in the House of Commons included General Alfred Knox, a former military agent in Russia and Kolchak's immediate associate, and Locker-Lampson Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office who had formerly been in command of an armoured detachment in Kolchak's army.

The second group within the ranks of the British bourgeoisie was that headed by Lloyd George consisting of representatives from commercial and industrial quarters.

While the representatives of the first group opposed normalization of economic and political relations with the USSR, concentrating their attention on trade with the colonies and the dominions of the British Empire, those active in the second group were associated with those spheres of industry concentrating on the export trade—mechanical engineering, shipbuilding, textiles, electrotechnical industry, etc.—that had a vested interest in trading with Soviet Russia which consequently meant that they were also interested in an improvement in political relations as well. Among their number were monopolists from the National Iron and Steel Federation, the metallurgical concern Baldwins Limited, the Armstrong concern, the Boiler Manufacturers Association, and the Shipbuilders' Association.

It was the conflict between these two groups which served to shape British foreign policy. The predominance of one or the other group led to a deterioration or an improvement in Anglo-Soviet relations. In 1925-1927 in the sphere of British foreign policy it was the line advocated by the diehards among the Conservatives which predominated: they opposed cooperation with the USSR and were in fav-

or of new military intervention. This led to a marked deterioration in Anglo-Soviet relations and a disruption of the latter through the fault of reactionary elements in Britain.

First Steps by the Diehards to Form an Anti-Soviet Bloc

In the mid-20s it was once again the British bourgeoisie and its advance guard the Conservative party which took the initiative in trying to set up a united anti-Soviet front and attemping to instigate once again military intervention against the USSR. This can be explained, first of all, by the fact that British capitalists were always consistent in their hostility to popular revolutions and to liberation movements everywhere. Second, Britain, at the period in question, was experiencing major economic setbacks, which the British bourgeoisie hoped to resolve by means of the economic and political enslavement of Soviet Russia.

In the third place, the intensification of anti-Soviet trends in Britain could be traced back to the mounting crisis within the British Empire. This crisis was emerging not only because of more independent tendencies in Britain's colonies and dominions but also because of the growth of the liberation movement in the colonies and dependencies under the influence of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

In the reactionary British press there now began a frenzied campaign of slander and lies and appeals for an all-embracing political and financial boycott of the USSR aimed at the ideological preparation of public opinion in case there should be new intervention against Soviet Russia. Mikhail Kalinin, the Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Central Executive Committee, noted in this connection that "it was possible to assert that probably no other state, no other European Cabinet had tried to cause so much harm and worked so systematically to oppose the interests of the Soviet Union as had the British Conservative cabinet." [27]

Particularly enthusiastic participants in this campaign were the Conservative newspapers controlled by Viscount Rothermere—*The Times*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Morning Post*. Ministers from Baldwin's Conservative Cabinet also took part in this campaign, in

particular the implacable enemy of Soviet Russia, Joynson-Hicks.

In the spring of 1925 the British Conservative Government, which with no justification had identified the activity of the Soviet Government with that of the Third International, tried now to put together a new "Holy Alliance"[28] with France, Italy and the countries of the Little Entente, so as to prepare an offensive against the USSR in the form of a joint ultimatum to abolish the Comintern.

At the same time it was being admitted in British imperialist circles that if Germany were not drawn into a united bloc of capitalist states it would be impossible to wage a successful fight against Soviet Russia. This conviction on the part of the other European countries could be traced back to Germany's considerable military potential that had begun to grow rapidly after the First World War, and its favorable geographical position for the transit of troops and military equipment.

Attempts to draw Germany into the anti-Soviet front were made during the period of the Locarno negotiations, i.e., in October 1925.

Even before the Locarno Conference, on February 20, 1925, to be precise, Austen Chamberlain sent a secret memorandum about British policy in Europe to the members of Stanley Baldwin's Government. Basically Chamberlain was proposing that European security should be organized without the involvement of Soviet Russia and that it would be organized in such a way as to oppose the interests of the USSR.

Chamberlain concluded the ideas spelt out in this memorandum with a proposal regarding the essential need to set up a new entente between the British Empire and France. In his opinion an alliance between Britain, France and Belgium could guarantee those countries against attack from Germany.

Yet Chamberlain's plan was not supported by the members of the Cabinet. Balfour, Curzon and Birkenhead declared that such a policy would lead Germany to seek a closer relationship with Russia. For this reason the Cabinet opted instead for concluding a general pact involving Germany as well, in which Britain would play the role of guarantor or arbiter.

Even at that stage there were more sober voices to be heard in Britain, pointing out that Germany after reconsti-

tuting her military and industrial potential might direct her first strike not at the East, but the West instead. Yet the Baldwin Government regarded the German threat to the West as problematic and its anti-Soviet policy as a much more immediate concern.

In a secret letter sent to the French Government on March 2, 1925 Chamberlain wrote of the need to draw Germany into the Anglo-French grouping, citing as the reason for it the threat of a Soviet-German agreement.

Chamberlain made it quite clear that German aggression against the USSR might well gain ground insofar as the projected agreement was supposed to guarantee the inviolability of the existing borders in the West, along the Rhine, but not in the East.

The Locarno Conference came to an end on October 16, 1925 when eight agreements and awards were initialled and signed. Chamberlain declared that Locarno would be a source of inspiration to people's hearts and minds. All this, however, was merely a smokescreen to conceal that not peace agreements, but pacts of agression were being signed. Through this "pact to guarantee the Rhine," Britain and Italy gave their guarantees for the security of the Franco-German and Belgian-German borders, yet they did not guarantee the borders of Germany's Eastern neighbours, in particular those of Poland and Czechoslovakia. In this way the British imperialists left Germany a completely free hand in the East, leaving that country ample scope to attack the USSR.

The British Conservatives did not bother to hide their delight at the results of the Locarno Conference, writing that a "new era" was dawning and calling attention to Chamberlain's achievements as a peacemaker "before history and the nation". Soon after Locarno Chamberlain, together with Briand and Stresemann, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their "peacemaking".

In the British Foreign Office and military circles, in particular the Committee of Imperial Defence the Locarno agreements were seen as directed against the USSR and the alleged "Bolshevik threat". In a secret memorandum of the Committee of Imperial Defence sent to the Foreign Office on July 26, 1926 the Locarno agreements were assessed as a weapon providing particularly effective protection against the threat coming from the East, "a weapon to oppose Bolshevism". [29]

British politicians and military leaders saw the purpose of the Locarno Treaty to have been "to reconcile Germany and France, and ... Poland and Germany," in other words to create a bloc of nations united in their hostility towards the USSR. And this purpose had been achieved.

"We started a gradual reconciliation of France, Germany and Poland with the approval and support of Italy and Central Europe" ... hoping "to tempt Germany and Poland to look to the West and resist whatever tempting offers Russia may make in order to break up the European family." It was also pointed out in the Committee's memorandum, that they "can persuade France, Germany and Italy to continue to cooperate in giving effect to ... Locarno policy, we shall have provided ourselves with the best and most effective protection against the common Russian danger." [30]

The main trend of the policy followed at Locarno was to isolate the USSR and prepare for new intervention. The British reactionaries regarded the Locarno Treaty as an important step towards drawing Germany into the orbit of anti-Soviet policy. Progressive world opinion saw the Locarno Treaty not as a peace treaty but as an alliance for war.

The Communist Party of Great Britain referred to the Rhine Pact as a "pact of blood". Mr. Saklatvala, a Communist member of Parliament, declared: "the Locarno Pact is not an instrument of peace at all ... the Pact of Locarno creates a new instrument of war". [31]

The 14th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) described the Locarno Treaty as a new bloc of the imperialists or as an alignment of forces for a new war, and it admitted that the guarantee agreements were aimed against the USSR. [32]

Soviet diplomats did all they could to break or at least blunt the anti-Soviet weapon of Locarno. On April 24, 1926 an agreement was signed between the USSR and Germany providing for non-aggression and neutrality. It served to consolidate the "Rapallo trend" in Soviet-German relations and in practical terms ruled out Germany's participation in any anti-Soviet actions. Germany took it upon herself not to take part in any coalition of states hostile to the Soviet Union and to oppose anti-Soviet aspirations on the part of the League of Nations.

This marked a new victory for the peace-loving policy

pursued by the USSR. In addition to the attemps to draw Germany, France and Italy into the anti-Soviet bloc, the British imperialists undertook energetic steps to involve in the activities of that bloc the Baltic states of Poland, Estonia and Latvia and also Finland as the link-up between the countries of the Baltic region and those of the North. They tried to set up an anti-Soviet alliance of Baltic states as the so-called Baltic Locarno (Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and then Finland) and also a bloc of Balkan States, a Balcan Locarno (Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Italy as well.

However the successes of Soviet diplomats, who unswervingly pursued a policy of peace and peaceful coexistence between states of two different social systems, and the sympathy and support from the working people of the Baltic and Balkan countries, together with the growth in the power of the Soviet Union and other factors, made inevitable the collapse of the plans made by the British diehards to exploit the peoples of those countries to fight a war against the USSR.

The Preparation of Open Attacks Against the USSR by Britain

After the failure of the plans by the British imperialists to cobble together an anti-Soviet bloc and to bring allies over to their side, whom they could use to fight against Soviet Russia, "the British Government" (as was duly pointed out by the USSR People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs) "decided independently and blatantly to attack the USSR, hoping nevertheless that this would provide a signal for similar acts on the part of other states." [33]

The strategy of the British imperialists' anti-Soviet policy remained unchanged. Only its tactics were modified slightly. While in 1925 and up until the end of 1926 the British conservatives had counted on setting up a united anti-Soviet front of the capitalist countries, severing diplomatic relations with the USSR and then provoking military intervention, at the beginning of 1927 they decided first of all to break off relations with the USSR and then, if conditions were favouring, to attack and draw other capitalist countries and forces of international and Russian counter-

revolution into intervention against the Soviet Union. This was why the international situation in the period 1926-1927 was characterized by a growing threat of military attack from the imperialist countries against the USSR under British leadership.

The first step in this offensive against the USSR was seen by the Conservatives to be the severance of political and economic relations wtih the Soviet Union. The most ardent of campaigners in this respect were the consistent enemies of Soviet Russia, Winston Churchill, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks, Secretary of State for Colonies Lord Birkenhead, who had been delivering increasingly provocative speeches aimed at reopening intervention against the USSR. Churchill delivered an unashamedly anti-Soviet speech on behalf of the government at a meeting in June 1926, demanding that any action be taken against the USSR. [34]

A group of right-wing Tories, led by such interventionists as Locker-Lampson and Alfred Knox, sought to achieve a total severance of relations with Soviet Russia, despite the decision of the Cabinet on June 16, 1926 to refrain from breaking off relations, together with that of having the Soviet diplomatic and trade representatives expelled from Britain.

So as to justify the need to break off Anglo-Soviet relations the Home Office, under Joynson-Hicks, published a White Paper on June 24, 1926 which consisted of a collection of false "documents" that had allegedly been found a year previously in the premises belonging to the Communist Party of Great Britain. These "documents", splashed across the pages of *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*, were designed to corroborate the false story of interference on the part of the Soviet Government in Britain's internal affairs. The absurd and unconvincing nature of this White Paper was so clear for all to see that Lloyd George declared in a speech to Parliament that he had never before seen such a ridiculous pretext as this one used by the Conservatives in their attempt to undermine Anglo-Soviet relations.

During the parliamentary debates which took place on June 25, 1926 the most reactionary of the Conservatives—Churchill, Knox, Locker-Lampson and Lord Birkenhead—demanded that direct steps against the Soviet Union should be undertaken immediately. The more cautious Conservati-

ves, such as Baldwin and Chamberlain, while referring to Britain's right to break off diplomatic relations with the USSR, considered that the time was not yet right for such a move.[35] They did not want to take such a risk without first making sure that the internal and international situations were judicious.

On July 22, 1926 a secret meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence was held. One of the first to address this meeting was Chancellor of the Exchequer Churchill. Again he plied his favourite theme, talking of the "Russian danger" and suggesting that the Chiefs of Staff from the three forces and also those in charge at the Foreign Office "should enquire into the subject and report upon the best way of meeting an ever threatening menace to civilization."[36]

The leaders of the Committee of Imperial Defence declared in their turn: "Since the Bolshevist regime was established in Russia its activities have been mainly directed against this country ... and in every part of the world we have been met by its persistent and consistent hostility ... Russian policy ... aims at the establishment of Communism."[37]

In order to oppose Soviet Russia, the leaders of the Committee of Imperial Defence thought it necessary to involve Germany, France, Poland, Italy and other European countries that had been drawn into the anti-Soviet bloc at Locarno. The leaders of the Committee even suggested that in the interests of this struggle the Anglo-Japanese Alliance be renewed on similar lines to those followed in 1902. At the end of the report sent by the leaders of the Committee of Imperial Defence to the Foreign Office it was observed that while not ruling out the possibility of military action, the Committee nevertheless considered that "war is not practical politics owing to ... a strong determination in the country against warlike operations ... there is also a continental opinion strongly opposed to a campaign against Russia."[38]

In these conditions Britain's military leaders suggested that "it is therefore to diplomacy that we have to look for the most practical and effective weapon to oppose Bolshevism."[39]

From the above it can be seen how the political and military leaders in Britain, the members of the Cabinet and prominent figures in the Foreign Office were carefully

weighing up the arguments for and against breaking off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

In a special memorandum of the Foreign Office prepared by the notorious Captain Gregory in accordance with instructions from Under-Secretary Locker-Lampson these arguments were presented in diplomatic terms. In the memorandum Gregory methodically and coolly analyzes the situation and the motives behind the actions recommended. He begins by considering the arguments for breaking off Anglo-Soviet relations and fails to refrain from piling on the lies. He maintained for example that the Soviet Union was allegedly seeking to provoke a direct armed conflict with the British Empire and that its actions throughout the world were aimed at destroying the British state.[40] He went on to ask whether Britain could tolerate such a situation or refrain from dealing a blow at Russia by breaking off relations? He also speculated as to whether, if it was decided that the time had come for a severance of relations, this would produce results that would be desirable for Britain. He also expressed doubts as to whether Britain could reconcile herself to Russian propaganda in the East and was in a position to withstand it. Gregory saw force as the only way to oppose Soviet policy in China, Persia and Afghanistan. Considering all this, Gregory believed that the breaking off would be undoubtedly of advantage, because Bolshevism would be eliminated inside as well as outside the country.[41] He was convinced that an economic boycott and a direct blow dealt against Russia by Britain would seriously undermine the power of the Soviet state.

What arguments did Gregory put forward to oppose breaking off relations with the USSR? He warned that, if relations were broken off, the Soviet Union would not remain passive and would take appropriate countermeasures. It would also be unlikely that France would support this break and fail to exploit the situation. He also thought that Germany would pursue a policy designed to consolidate relations with Russia. He thought Poland would also in her turn be thinking about her own security in the circumstances. Gregory was interested above all in the question under which conditions British-Soviet relations might be re-established if they had once been broken.[42] He also considered it important to bear in mind the importance of supporting trade relations with the USSR. If Birtain was not going to trade with Soviet Russia, its place might be taken by the

United States. Finally Gregory drew attention to the fact that while breaking off relations was easy, it might not be so easy to re-establish them. [43]

Gregory also made suggestions as to what action it would be best to take, if a decision was taken to break off relations with the USSR. He thought that this break would lead first of all to the British mission in Moscow being recalled and likewise British diplomatic representatives from Petrograd and Vladivostok, and to all the Russian staff of ARCOS (All Russian Cooperative Society) and Centrosoyus being expelled from Britain. [44]

This programme for breaking off diplomatic relations with the USSR was incorporated into the official policy of the British Cabinet. The decision in principle to break off relations with the Soviet Union was taken on October 7, 1926 at the Conservative Party Conference in Scarborough, which signified a victory for the right wing of the diehards.

Since November 1926 the anti-Soviet campaign in Britain assumed an aggressive character. After embarking on such a course Chamberlain announced in Parliament on December 1, 1926 that the British Government reserved the right to break off the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement of 1921 when it considered that British interests made such a step imperative. [45]

In an answer to a petition drawn up by 200 Conservative Members of Parliament led by Locker-Lampson and Knox, Prime Minister Baldwin declared that the government was merely waiting for a sufficiently serious pretext for breaking off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. [46] Reactionary newspapers in Britain estimated at the time that 150 members of Parliament were insisting on breaking off relations with the USSR.

Behind the back of the diehards it was possible once again to discern the true instigators of this anti-Soviet foreign policy—British bankers, leading industrialists, colonialist circles and the land-owning aristocracy. Most active among them were the former owners of enterprises in the USSR, which had in the meantime been nationalized, and creditors who were members of the Association of British Creditors. Especial zeal in this anti-Soviet campaign was to be observed among financial magnates and leading lights in the oil monopolies Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and Royal Dutch Shell, headed at the time by Henri Deterding.

Churchill came forward with a programme for economic

intervention directed against the USSR which would have provided a prelude to military intervention. He outlined a plan for the financial strangling of Soviet Russia by organizing an international economic front. Churchill suggested that an international alliance of creditors be set up to present demands to the USSR.

The Fight Against Breaking Off Relations with the USSR

At this period the fight between the advocates and the opponents of breaking off Anglo-Soviet relations flared up with new urgency: a struggle between the military reactionary grouping of the diehards on the one hand, and the representatives of industrialists and traders interested in maintaining economic links with the USSR on the other. Lancashire factory owners who had been successfully selling machinery in the USSR energetically opposed any break in Anglo-Soviet relations.

The influential economic journal *Statist* came out against the repetition of what it saw as old political mistakes, such as military intervention, in no uncertain terms: it reminded its readers that the policy of armed intervention in Russian affairs had been tried out after the Revolution and had been soundly defeated. [47]

A particularly resolute struggle against moves to break off diplomatic relations was waged by the working people once again under the leadership of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

In January 1927 a conference of the Independent Labour Party, at this stage very much under the influence of the Communist Party, adopted a resolution to oppose what they saw as the continued activity of the reactionaries in Britain with regard to the Soviet Republic.

The Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee was very active among the broad masses of the British working people. It put out leaflets in support of Soviet Russia calling upon the working people to send protest resolutions to the government demanding a normalization of relations with the USSR; at the beginning of February 1927 rallies were held in the towns of Bolton, Wakefield, Barnsley and others at which strong protests were made against intervention on Britain's part and severance of relations with the USSR. Members of the Labour Party in Wakefield made

it publicly known that in the case of any war by Britain against the USSR they would refuse to support their government.

Under the influence of the labour movement in Britain, in February 1927 one of the national organizations representing the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party lodged an official protest against severance of relations with the USSR.

The need to defend the interests of British industrialists and traders compelled some of the Labour and Liberal members of Parliament to come out in favor of improved trade relations with the "great Russian nation", to cite the phrase used at the time by MP John Bromley. He was supported by a number of other MPs from those parties.

Before a final decision was taken Chamberlain circulated among members of the Cabinet a special secret memorandum on January 24, 1927, suggesting that they should weigh up all the issues involved in relations between Britain and Russia.[48] Chamberlain admitted that before Parliament had gone into recess for the holidays the Prime Minister had had unofficial talks with representatives of the Conservative Party, who were in favour of breaking off diplomatic relations with Russia.

Chamberlain began by analyzing the consequences that breaking off relations with the USSR would have and the effect this step would have on Britain's foreign policy. He thought that the break would be seen as unexpected and sensational, yet it would not deal a serious blow to the Soviet Government.[49] He considered it possible that Italy might follow Britain's example although Italian businessmen might on the other hand take Britain's place in Soviet markets. Chamberlain did not think that the break would lead to any changes in the policies pursued by the United States or France, who was currently negotiating for the conclusion of a trade agreement.

As for Germany, Chamberlain assumed that the German nationalists were basing their whole opposition to Locarno on the idea that good relations with Russia were of vital importance for Germany and that Locarno was a British trap with the help of which Britain hoped to draw Germany into a quarrel with the Soviets. Turkey's policy was undecided, as she was seeking support both from Russia and from the League of Nations. With regard to Persia, Chamberlain was of the opinion that breaking off relations would

stimulate anti-British activity on the part of the Soviet Government in that country.

By way of conclusion it was pointed out in the memorandum that breaking off diplomatic relations would not seriously weaken the position of the Soviet Government and neither would it lead to a change in Soviet policy: this meant that there was nothing else that Britain could do other than declare war.[50] As for the effect of a severance of relations on the situation within the country, Chamberlain held that such an act would place traders, including bankers, in a critical situation.

The response from the Conservative minister to the question as to whether breaking off relations would have a similar effect upon Labour leaders was worth noting: he declared that the Soviets were just as much enemies for MacDonalds, Thomases, Snowdens and Clynes in the Labour Party as they were for the Conservatives.[51] Yet while actually supporting the Conservatives, the MacDonalds and Thomases, according to Chamberlain, were obliged to keep looking over their shoulders at the left, at what he termed the extremists in their own party. It would be difficult to provide a more exact description of the right-wing Labour leaders in the words of a Conservative. Finally, when touching upon Lloyd George's stand on this question, Chamberlain pointed out that for him the only way to destroy Bolshevism, to put an end to or modify the Soviet system, was to use the method of economic intervention against the USSR.

This more cautious policy on the part of the moderates did not however satisfy the diehards among the Conservatives. They were still demanding more decisive action on the part of the government.

After adopting a course calling for steps to speed up the severance of diplomatic relations with the USSR, which the diehards saw as the first stage on the path to military intervention, the Conservatives moved on from sensational anti-Soviet outpourings in the press, parliamentary debates and special Cabinet meetings to direct provocations.

On February 12, 1927, with the British Government well aware of what was going on, a provocative attack that was clearly politically motivated was made on the Soviet mission in London, that was to have provided not merely a signal for a further extension of the anti-Soviet campaign, but also a decisive step towards the severance of British-Soviet diplomatic relations.

In January and February 1927 the British Cabinet was carefully preparing a Note of Warning to the Soviet Government. Foreign Office staff, Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain, [52] and other Cabinet ministers as well, took part in elaborating the text. Winston Churchill played a particularly active part in preparing this Note: he was campaigning all along for breaking off British-Soviet relations. [53]

On February 23, 1927 the final version of the Note was handed by Chamberlain to the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Britain. This Note that contained a large number of completely groundless accusations addressed to the Soviet Government, played a major part in the deterioration of British-Soviet relations.

According to the plans of the British diehards this Note was to have paved the way for a severance of diplomatic relations between Britain and the USSR. It concluded with an open threat from the British Government to the USSR that the trade agreement would be broken off and even normal diplomatic relations terminated. [54]

According to the authors of the Note, this threat by the British Government was to have been a kind of head-on diplomatic reconnaissance, designed to intensify the USSR's political and economic isolation. The British reactionary press observed that the February Note would serve to knit together the coalition consisting of the United States, Japan and Italy, indeed that of "the whole Christian world" for an onslaught against the USSR. The Note bore the mark of a compromise between the right-wing diehards, on the one hand, and the moderates allied with Chamberlain, on the other, who preferred preliminary reconnaissance to an immediate severance of relations with the USSR. Palme Dutt referred to it as a Note of war preparation. [55]

New Exposure of British Myths

Active steps by the USSR Government, taken even before the Note was made public, anticipated the hostile action by the British Conservatives and rendered the Note completely ineffective. In a special interview on February 4, 1927, Litvinov, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs announced to the assembled foreign journalists his hope that reasonable elements within the British Parliament and public at large would override those in favour of the iron-fist

policy which would result in nothing other than disaster for the peoples of the world and the cause of peace.[56] On February 21st the Soviet Union's Central Executive Committee heard a special report submitted by Litvinov in response to enquiries from a group of CEC members in connection within the intensification of the anti-Soviet campaign in Britain.

This report served to expose the true instigators of this campaign, the groups and forces behind it. These were the so-called creditors, owners of nationalized enterprises and speculators (who had bought up shares from former Russian industrialists who had fled the country) headed by oil magnates, and also Russian emigrés, monarchists and former functionaries of the tsarist government, who had settled in London and who were in close touch with members of Parliament and the British Cabinet. Certain members of the British Cabinet openly sided with these groups. Indeed the government itself looked favorably on this campaign, making unfounded declarations to the effect that the Soviet Government had violated the treaty of 1921. The Soviet Government once again declared its sincere desire to establish normal relations between the two countries.[57]

These declarations by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs were followed by a Note from the Soviet Government dated February 26, 1927 in reply to the British Note of warning. The Soviet Government denied completely the unfounded accusations of indulging in "propaganda" that had been made against it, pointing out how it had honestly complied with the terms of the 1921 agreement. Numerous examples were cited in the Note to make clear the slanderous nature of the anti-Soviet activity on the part of such politicians as Winston Churchill, Lord Birkenhead, and Leopold Amery.

In response to threats from the British Government that they would break off trade and diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia it was made clear in the Note that this did not frighten anyone in the USSR.

This did not however deter the diehards who with renewed zeal were campaigning for terminating relations with the USSR. Chamberlain asked for a parliamentary sanction regarding an independent resolution of this question by the Conservative Government. Insofar as at that moment not all the necessary preparations for the break had been made, the House of Commons rejected the diehards' resolution,

calling for a severance of relations between Britain and the USSR.

In actual fact by this time the British Government was putting the finishing touches to its preparations for breaking off relations with the USSR both at home and in the sphere of foreign policy. In step with the other capitalist countries, Britain was enlarging its army, fleet and military allocations. In 1927 Britain's military budget came to 660,000,000 pounds sterling.

Parallel to this preparation for military intervention against the USSR by Britain's Conservative Government was the activization of the Zinoviev—Trotskyite opposition and other hostile elements within the USSR: there existed by this time a united front, as it were, stretching "from Chamberlain to Trotsky."

The First Open Blow by the British Conservatives

At the beginning of April 1927, when they estimated that the international situation was sufficiently favorable, the British diehards embarked upon overt action, dealing blows directly against Soviet Russia.

The first of these blows was an attack against the Soviet mission in Peking. On April 6th at eleven o'clock in the morning armed police, detectives and soldiers of Chang Tso-lin's army, at the bidding of the British general Sutton, and Miles Lampson, the British ambassador in China, and with the direct involvement of British officers, forced their way into the building of the diplomatic mission and sacked the premises, arresting several members of diplomatic personnel and subjecting them to unprecedented abuse and beatings. Even women and diplomats' children were subjected to this brutal treatment. Fifteen members of the Soviet mission's staff were seized by the police and for a whole month were illegally held prisoner under the threat of a military tribunal. Similar attacks were made on the premises of the Soviet military attaché in China, the Far-Eastern Bank, the Chinese-Eastern Railway, and the flats inhabited by employees from the diplomatic mission were also broken into and plundered. The attack on the diplomatic mission and the arrest of Soviet diplomatic personnel, who enjoyed diplomatic immunity, was a blatant violation of international law.

Once more at the bidding of British politicians, the Pek-

ing Government concocted provocative forgeries presented to the public as "documents" allegedly found in the Soviet diplomatic mission that were later to figure in Baldwin's diplomatic notes. However these forgeries were such crude and careless affairs that no one had any doubts about their false nature. These forgeries, which were published in a White Paper, incorporated spellings no longer used in the USSR and they were full of crude spelling mistakes.

The shameful behaviour of the Chang Tso-ling clique with regard to this slander against the Soviet Government is reflected in the directive sent by the Peking Government to the Head of Intelligence. In the directive those in charge of intelligence detachments were instructed to mobilize all members and to find without fail stores of communist literature and weapons in Soviet offices, even if to this end it proved necessary to empty out the reserves already stored at police HQ. [58]

The Soviet Government and the Soviet press exposed the true nature of these "documents" mentioned in the White Paper demonstrating beyond doubt that they were forgeries. This perfidious attack on the Soviet diplomatic mission in Peking had been thought up by the diehards in Britain as a provocation against the USSR and as a blow to undermine the Chinese revolutionary movement. The leading role played by the British reactionaries in this provocation and the link between the counterrevolutionary efforts of the Conservatives against the USSR, on the one hand, and China, on the other, were now clear for all to see. The Peking Government would not have dared to carry out these provocative acts without support from outside. This was openly admitted by the head of the Peking Government, Chang Tso-ling who told foreign correspondents on March 27, 1927 that he "contemplated breaking off relations with the Soviets and proposed to discuss the situation with the Foreign Ministers." [59] The attack had been undertaken not only with the direct involvement of British officers and the British ambassador in China but also with the approval of the Dutch ambassador, the doyen of the diplomatic corps, [60] since the Soviet mission in Peking was on the territory of the international enclave which enjoyed diplomatic immunity.

At the same time as the attack on the Soviet diplomatic mission in Peking attacks were also made on USSR consulates in Shanghai and Tientsin. The fact that these attacks all took place at exactly the same time, although in diffe-

rent parts of the country, demonstrated beyond any doubt that they had all been carried out in accordance with a single plan and that they had been organized from a single centre and instigated first and foremost by Britain and the United States.

With regard to these provocations engineered by British and American imperialists in China it is essential to draw attention to the close link between the counterrevolutionary coup perpetrated by Chiang Kai-shek in Shanghai on April 12, 1927. This coup was carried out with the approval and support of British, American and Japanese imperialists. It was aimed at bringing to power rabid Chinese reactionaries led by Chiang Kai-shek, who, it was assumed, would head the struggle against the USSR. Chiang Kai-shek assumed the role of a Chinese Cavaignac. This development signified a temporary defeat for the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution.

All these events complicated international relations, including those between the Soviet Union and China. The Soviet Government did not, however, give way to these provocations and did not allow itself to be drawn into armed conflict with China. In a Note sent to the Peking Government on April 9 the Soviet Government demanded that all the arrested Soviet diplomatic staff be set free and that all the property seized by the police be restored. Until such time as these demands be satisfied the Soviet Government recalled its Chargé d'Affaires together with all the other staff.[61] The restrained policy of the USSR upset the calculations of the British diehards who had been counting on a Soviet-Chinese conflict. The provocations by the British imperialists and the Chinese reactionaries proved a total failure.

Nevertheless the events in China were a dress rehearsal for the British Government, which was making ready for a similar attack against Soviet offices in Britain, this time the Soviet Trade Delegation in London and ARCOS (All-Russian Co-operative Society). Before these attacks took place, a meeting was called by Prime Minister Baldwin. As Joynson-Hicks was later to inform the Commons, the Prime Minister and Chamberlain gave their approval for the raid to take place on ARCOS.[62]

The Attack Against ARCOS or the Lost Document

On the evening of May 12, 1927 a detachment of British policemen, Russian White Guards and interpreters from the

Foreign Office (about 200 people in all), without producing a warrant and on the personal instructions of Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks, broke into the house at 49, Moorgate Street, the premises of both the Soviet Trade Delegation and the Anglo-Soviet joint-stock company ARCOS. The policemen completely ransacked the premises of the Trade Delegation, blatantly violating international law and the British-Soviet agreement of 1921 which had granted diplomatic immunity to the head of the Trade Delegation and the right to engage in coded correspondence. The police, who had been looking for a mythical secret document that had allegedly gone missing from the War Office, broke into all the fire-proof cabinets and safes, doors of reinforced concrete seizing secret documents, letters in cypher and codes and also mail that had only just been delivered and that contained important state papers.[63] Khudyakov, a member of the delegation's staff, when he refused at gun-point to hand over keys to a safe, was seized and beaten up by policemen. All the staff from the Trade Delegation and ARCOS were arrested and searched, including employees who had diplomatic passports. Then orders were given to the Soviet employees to leave the premises of the Trade Delegation and ARCOS offices. Agents from Scotland Yard now had complete charge of the materials that had come into their hands and could fabricate and circulate any "documents" at a moment's notice, what they eventually did. The London *Times* later made it known that the preparation of false documents on ARCOS-headed paper was entrusted to specially briefed agents working for Joynson-Hicks to whom he had given the necessary instructions in advance.[64]

The search of the premises belonging to the Trade Delegation and ARCOS by the police lasted four days (till the night of May 16) despite repeated protests by the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires and the acting head of the Trade Delegation made to the British authorities and Foreign Secretary Chamberlain, verbally and in writing.

The reactionary press, headed by *The Times*, maintained that the authorities had "found" in secret concrete vaults a hoard of materials that allegedly testified to the existence of a large Soviet organization of an anti-British nature, aimed at neither more nor less than the "overthrow of the existing order in Britain."

In reality however the most thorough of searches in the USSR Trade Delegation and ARCOS carried out by the

police did not produce (and indeed could not have produced) any results. No documents "exposing the USSR" were found, for they had never existed in the first place.

Later Joynson-Hicks admitted that the search had not been "sufficiently effective" and that an inadequate quantity of documents had been discovered, and that the document they had been looking for "was found to be missing."[65] It was maintained that the original of the "missing document" had allegedly been destroyed by the staff at ARCOS when the police had been breaking their way into the building.

The British diehards had organized this attack against the Trade Delegation and ARCOS in the hope of ensuring the diplomatic isolation of the USSR and creating an excuse for breaking off relations with Soviet Russia. As a result of this attack the Conservatives had also dealt a blow at the development of economic relations between the USSR and Britain. As a result of these actions and also in accordance with direct instructions from the government the agreement between the Midland Bank and the USSR granting ten million pounds worth of credit to Soviet foreign trade organizations was repudiated. This stop went totally against the interests of British export firms.

In response to the insolent provocations by the Conservatives the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in London lodged an all-out protest the very same day.[66] On May 17th the Soviet Government lodged a second protest against this crude violation of the British-Soviet agreement of 1921 by the British Government. It described the attack against the Soviet Trade Delegation and ARCOS as an act which put at risk the continuation of normal relations between Britain and the USSR.[67] The British Government did not reply to the Notes from the Soviet Government, thereby confirming the latter's conclusions to the effect that Britain was not anxious to maintain normal relations and trade links with the USSR.

Insofar as the British Government had deliberately brought about a serious deterioration in its relations with the USSR, and did not guarantee the economic organizations from the Soviet Union the possibility of working normally without obstruction within Britain, the Soviet Government took the steps appropriate in the circumstances. On May 17, 1927 the Council of People's Commissars adopted a special resolution regarding measures to ensure normal

trading operations, suggesting to the People's Commissariat for Foreign and Domestic Trade that foreign trade operations should only be conducted in those countries with which the USSR enjoyed normal diplomatic relations.

Britain Severs Diplomatic Relations with the USSR

The Baldwin Government paid no heed to these warnings. It adopted unanimously a resolution providing for the severance of diplomatic relations with the USSR on May 23, 1927 in keeping with the wishes of British reactionaries, in particular the oil magnates, the colonial bourgeoisie and landed aristocracy and financiers from the Association of British Creditors in Russia.

On May 24, 25 and 26, 1927 parliamentary debates were held to discuss the severance of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Britain. In order to whip up anti-Soviet hysteria the British Government published a White Paper consisting of 17 copies of "documents" allegedly testifying to anti-British activity on the part of the Soviet Government and the Comintern. The false nature of the "documents" in the White Paper was so obvious that even some leaders of the Liberal Party referred to it as a "ridiculous document," "an extravaganza of incredible nonsense." [68]

During the parliamentary debates Baldwin in the name of the government made a proposal that British-Soviet relations be broken off and the British-Soviet trade agreement of 1921 be terminated. [69]

Nevertheless a number of MPs from the Liberal Party, including Lloyd George, spoke out against severing diplomatic relations. He referred to the major importance of trade with the USSR insofar as British industrialists and exporters stood to lose an enormous market, if relations were to be broken off with that country. [70] With reference to the failure of military intervention against the Soviet Union in 1917-1920 Lloyd George warned the Conservatives of the danger of embarking upon any new adventures of that sort. James Maxton [71] of the Independent Labour Party and Susan Lawrence of the Labour Party spoke out in the same vein.

The position adopted by the right-wing Labour leaders was very different however. During the parliamentary debates of May 24-26 when the question as to the future of

British-Soviet relations was being decided, they supported the government. Speeches made by MacDonald, Thomas and Clynes were permeated with hatred for communism.[72]

The right-wing Labour leaders, anxious to blunt the vigilance of the British working class, disrupted the campaign by the working people of Britain against the action by the Conservative Government. MacDonald and Thomas declared that all discussion in workers' organizations in support of the USSR would be considered provocative. This treacherous policy on their part resulted in the acceptance by 357 votes to 111 of Baldwin's proposal that diplomatic relations with the USSR should be broken off and that the British-Soviet trade agreement of 1921 be terminated.

There is no doubt that the severance of British-Soviet diplomatic relations was carried out by the British Conservatives not without the complicity of the right-wing leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions. The position adopted by right-wing Labour members and the tactics they pursued with regard to fundamental questions of foreign policy, in particular that of British-Soviet relations, did not differ essentially from the Conservatives' policy.

The day after the parliamentary debates, on May 27, 1927, Chamberlain delivered a Note to the acting Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in London on the subject of the termination of the trade agreement of 1921 and the severance of diplomatic relations between Britain and the Soviet Union.[73]

In a Note dated May 28, 1927 the Soviet Government categorically denied all the unproven and groundless accusations of the Conservatives to the effect that the USSR had violated the terms of the 1921 trade agreement. All responsibility for the severance of diplomatic relations and the consequences which "this step would inevitably have with regard to existing political and economic international relations"[74] was laid at the door of the British Government.

This action by the British Conservatives dealt a major blow to the cause of peace worldwide. A serious threat now hung over Soviet Russia. The tension in the international situation, stemming from the provocation engineered by the British imperialists, led the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) to appeal to all party organizations and all workers and peasants to be on their guard and repulse all aggressive manoeuvring on the part of the capitalists.[75]

Even some politicians in Britain considered that the breaking off of relations with the USSR made greater the risk of war. The provocative acts organized by the British Conservatives against the USSR gave rise to indignant protest from the Soviet people which found expression in enormous demonstrations and political rallies. Working people in Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, Minsk, Kiev, Baku, Kostroma and other towns took to the streets protesting against the aggressive action of the British Conservatives. The British working class demonstrated once again in support of Soviet Russia, and its lead was followed by the working people of France, the United States, Germany, Italy and other countries of Europe, Asia and the American continent.

The Third Open Blow Dealt by the British Conservatives

Since the severance of British-Soviet relations did not lead to the results hoped for by the British imperialists, they resorted to new provocations.

On June 7, 1927 the Soviet plenipotentiary in Poland Pyotr Voikov was murdered in Warsaw. The murderer turned out to be a nineteen-year-old White Guard with a Polish passport associated with the Russian White Guards in London and the Polish ruling circles and in the pay of the British Intelligence Service.

Later British Conservative newspapers admitted the direct link between the anti-Soviet action in London, on the one hand, and Poland, on the other. [76]

The British imperialists had been hoping that the murder of Voikov would draw the Soviet Union into a war against Poland, ruled over at the time by the bourgeoisie and landowning classes, just as the Sarajevo assassination had sparked off the First World War of 1914-1918. British reactionaries were ready to fight on this occasion as well till the last Polish soldier. The Polish reactionaries in their turn saw their country as the advance guard for Anglo-French imperialism in the fight against the USSR.

As the Soviet Government pointed out at the time, no one doubted the existence of close links between the Anglo-Chinese provocation in China, the ARCOS raid, Britain's decision to break off diplomatic relations with the USSR and the murder of Voikov. They were all links in one and the same chain, "controlled by an experienced hand from

a single centre." [77] The imperialists of Britain and the United States made every attempt to encourage Poland to attack the USSR, equipping her to this end via Danzig and Gdynia with weapons and ammunition. Polish fascists went all out to prepare for an attack against the USSR: factories producing weapons and ammunition worked round the clock, and officers from the Reserve were issued money and told to fit themselves out with uniforms. Officers from HQ were instructed to take charge of the railways.

While doing all they could to goad Poland into attacking the USSR, the British imperialists also stepped up the subversive activity of their agents working inside the Soviet Union. The Soviet state security bodies exposed and then rendered harmless a number of espionage and subversive organizations in Moscow, Leningrad, the Ukraine and Byelorussia all financed by Britain, and in particular the British mission in Moscow. [78] The intensification of imperialist provocations both within the country and abroad made the threat of war against the USSR very real at this period.

The Soviet Union responded to the subversive activities of the British diehards with unswerving resolution and steady efforts to consolidate its political and military might. The Soviet Government made a strong protest to Poland in Notes despatched on June 7 and June 11, 1927, [79] making it clear that it held Poland responsible for what had happened. It demanded rigorous punishment for all implicated in the murder, and immediate cessation of the activities of all terrorist organizations within Poland directed against the USSR and its representatives. [80]

Failure of Provocation Against the USSR

The failure of these new attempts by international imperialism to organize military and economic intervention against the USSR can be traced to a number of factors.

First of all it can be explained by the fact that the Communist Party and the Soviet Government pursued a policy consistently and unswervingly aimed at promoting peace, a policy based on the growing economic, political and military might of the Soviet state and on the energetic support of the working people resolutely determined to take up arms in the defence of their Motherland, should the imperialists attack.

Second, the British imperialists had failed to mobilize

a united anti-Soviet front of the capitalist powers in view of the marked aggravation of contradictions in the relations between the imperialist countries and their rivalry in the fight to win Soviet markets.

The hatred felt by the American imperialists for the USSR provided some basis for the coordination of joint anti-Soviet actions by the United States and Britain despite various contradictions which complicated relations between them at the time. Of decisive importance in this respect was the position adopted by industrialists and trading companies in the USA who intended to take Britain's place in Soviet markets, making the most of the fact that the latter had now withdrawn from the orbit of Soviet trade. The *Journal of Commerce,* for instance, mouthpiece for New York industrialists, wrote of the need to capture the trade formerly conducted by Britain with Russia.[81] Hence the official announcement from the White House after Britain had broken off diplomatic relations with the USSR to the effect that this break did not concern the USA.

Nor did the British imperialists succeed in drawing France into the anti-Soviet bloc. What prevented them from achieving this was the differences between the two countries in the struggle for domination of Europe and on the German question, as well as the tension between Italy and France in the Mediterranean over who should gain control of Tunisia, Corsica, Nice, and Savoy. Poincaré's reactionary Government and the right-wing press in France did admittedly sympathize over Britain's severance of diplomatic relations with the USSR. The reactionary press in France called upon its own government to follow Britain's example. The oil king Henri Deterding who had been orchestrating the anti-Soviet campaign in France even made a special trip to France at this time. The aggressive plans of the Poincaré Government and the magnates from the Comité de Forges met with opposition however, not merely from the working people of France but also from the petty bourgeoisie and the middle ranks of bourgeoisie. Business circles in France felt unable to encourage their government to risk breaking off relations with the USSR so as to join the British-inspired anti-Soviet bloc. Moreover, at a time when British-Soviet relations were being broken off, French businessmen were hoping to capture Soviet orders from British entrepreneurs to boost their own industry, which at the time was facing a major shortage of markets because of

the stabilization of the franc. This was why the official mouthpiece of the French Government *Les Temps*, the moderate and left-wing press were all calling for an independent course in French foreign policy in its relations with the USSR.

At the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers from Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Italy and Belgium held on June 14-15, 1927 Briand declared that France was unwilling to break off political or economic relations with the USSR. [82]

The British Conservatives had particularly high hopes of drawing Germany into a united anti-Soviet bloc. In return for its involvement Britain was ready to give Germany vague promises to strike down certain articles of the Versailles Treaty and review the Dawes Plan, etc.

Some German politicians and Social-Democratic leaders had approved the British Government's decision to break off diplomatic relations with the USSR and were in favour of joining an anti-Soviet front. [83] At the same time the German bourgeoisie was frightened of losing Soviet markets and was therefore unwilling to sever advantageous economic relations with the USSR on the strength of illusory promises from British politicians.

At the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers held in June 1927 Stresemann rejected Chamberlain's proposal for a "crusade against Russia" which he saw as "foolish and meaningless." [84]

The country which associated itself more closely than any other with the anti-Soviet policy of the British imperialists was fascist Italy. At the time the fascist press put forward the idea that Italy should actively participate in the anti-Soviet bloc. After the ARCOS raid however Italy did not break off diplomatic relations with the USSR, and did not join in any anti-Soviet crusade. Considerations of the immediate economic advantage to be gained from trading with the USSR, and awareness of Soviet Russia's strength outweighed the Italian fascists' hatred for the Soviet state.

Soviet foreign policy that skilfully made use of the contradictions within the capitalist world ruined the efforts by the British Conservatives to set up a united anti-Soviet bloc of the capitalist states. When British-Soviet relations were at the most tense point theSoviet Government signed a treaty of non-aggression and neutrality with Germany in 1926,

later, on March 11, 1927 a treaty of friendship and neutrality and a trade agreement with Turkey, on August 1, 1926 a treaty of non-aggression and neutrality with Afghanistan and on June 2, 1927 a trade agreement with Latvia, and several more agreements with other countries as well.

In the third place, the international solidarity of the working people was one of the decisive factors that prevented the British imperialists from setting up the anti-Soviet bloc and unleashing a war against the USSR. The fight of the working masses in Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and other countries was led by the communist parties in the countries concerned. The Communist Party of Great Britain for example appealed to the British working people to come out in support of the USSR, to set up Councils of Action to uphold the Soviet cause and to organize a general strike.[85] Throughout the country there was a wave of rallies and demonstrations: those taking part were voicing their protest against the anti-Soviet policy of the Conservatives.

The Cooperative Congress held in June 1927 adopted on behalf of its four million members a unanimous resolution calling for a resumption of relations with the Soviet Union and promotion of trade with that country. This was also demanded by the annual conference of miners in South Wales and the annual conference of the railwaymen. The French workers were also active in their support of the Soviet Union. The working people of Germany demanded that peace be maintained and called for friendly relations with the Soviet state. The Communist Party of Poland assured the Soviet people that Polish workers would fight in every way they could to avert war against the Soviet Union. Peoples from other countries in the world also protested against military intervention in the USSR.

A clear expression of the solidarity of the working people of all countries and their love for the Soviet Union was provided by the Congress for Friends of the USSR held in Moscow on November 10-12 to mark the tenth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. The Congress was attended by 947 delegates from 43 countries representing a wide variety of views and sympathies. Members of Social-Democratic parties were to be found side by side with rank-and-file members of revolutionary and reformist trade unions and Communists and so on. The Congress made an appeal to the working people of the world to defend

the USSR with all the means at their disposal, the home of the working people and the bastion of socialism, and to oppose any threat of a new war. This appeal met with a warm response among broad strata of the population in many states.

The Resumption of British-Soviet Diplomatic Relations

The severance of diplomatic relations between Britain and the USSR had not brought about the fruition of the British imperialists' hopes with regard to the setting up of a united anti-Soviet front of the capitalist powers. At the same time this political break had dealt a serious blow to economic ties between Britain and the USSR.

Soviet Russia had begun to satisfy its import requiremens through trade with other countries. German, American, Italian, Swiss and other firms were endeavouring to develop trade as quickly as possible with the USSR. While Britain's share of Soviet imports had been 18.6 per cent in 1925-1926, in 1927-1928 after the severance of relations with the USSR this figure had fallen to 5.5 per cent, while Germany's share of Soviet imports had risen from 25.5 to 29.9 per cent and the United States' share from 17.7 to 22.1 per cent.[86] In 1927-1928, Britain received only a quarter of the number of orders that had been placed in 1924-1925.[87]

The industrial crisis which had struck in 1929 in the wake of the general crisis of capitalism had hit Britain particularly hard. British industrialists and exporters admitted that whole branches of industry were at a standstill because of Britain's loss of her former Soviet markets. This led representatives of the industrial bourgeoisie active in the export trade and those British businessmen with a vested interest in the growth of British-Soviet trade to view the policy pursued by the British diehards, that had led to the severance of diplomatic relations with the USSR, as mistaken, since those relations were an essential prerequisite for the development of trade and financial cooperation between the two countries.

This explains why in 1928 and 1929 more and more voices were to be heard calling for a normalization of diplomatic and economic relations with the USSR. This movement embraced not merely a certain section of British industrialists and exporters but also prominent figures from the Liberal and Labour Parties who upheld their interests

both in Parliament and in the party press. In order to bring about a resumption of normal trade relations and to assess in more detail the Soviet Union's potential for trading with Britain the British industrialsts and exporters sent various delegations to the USSR. One such delegation, which set out in March 1929, consisted of 84 people representing 150 firms. When they arrived in the USSR the members of this delegation were met by leaders of the Supreme Economic Council, the relevant People's Commissariats and they were able to acquaint themselves with the work of many enterprises and economic bodies.

The Soviet Union did not conceal its eagerness to trade with Britain and it was ready to place orders totalling between 150 and 200 million pounds. At the same time it left the British visitors in no doubt that wide-scale economic cooperation between the USSR and Britain would only be possible if normal diplomatic relations were restored, providing an appropriate legal basis for economic and other agreements. [88]

The members of the delegation came to the conclusion that it was impossible to develop British-Soviet trade and any kind of economic relations with the USSR, if diplomatic relations with the latter were not restored. These views were expressed by the British visitors during their stay in Moscow and also after their return to Britain in a special report on their trip.

The Soviet Union's achievements in the sphere of peaceful construction and the consolidation of its military might, and the success of Soviet foreign policy oriented towards peace, led the more far-sighted section of the British bourgeoisie to come out in favour of a normalization of political relations with the Soviet state, not to mention Britain's urgent need for normal economic relations with the USSR in view of the rivalry between the various capitalist states to play the dominant role in trade with Soviet Russia, at a time when the working people and all progressive forces in Britain were campaigning for a resumption of diplomatic relations with the USSR.

It is precisely the controversy over British-Soviet relations that became the most crucial issue in the period leading up to the parliamentary election of 1929 and during the actual campaign itself. During this election the Conservatives, who were still pursuing their anti-Soviet policies, opposed any resumption of diplomatic relations with Soviet

Russia. The Labour and Liberal Parties adopted a different point of view reflecting the interests of the industrial and trading bourgeoisie. To a large extent this is what brought them victory in May 1929. Nevertheless MacDonald's second Labour Government, which now came to power, went out of its way to delay the resumption of diplomatic relations with the USSR. For four months MacDonald and his Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson tried in vain to extract concessions from the USSR over controversial issues of "propaganda", and the payment of "debts" in exchange for the restoration of diplomatic relations.

The Soviet Government for its part made no conditions for the resumption of normal relations with Britain since it held the view that all controversial questions and mutual claims should be considered only after the basis for diplomatic relations had been legally settled in the accepted way. During negotiations between the USSR representative, the Soviet Ambassador to France Valerian Dovgalevsky and Britain's representative, Arthur Henderson, which took place in London at the end of July 1929, the British Government again demanded that controversial issues should be discussed in advance. The Soviet representative rejected this demand and the negotiations were halted. These steps by the MacDonald Government gave rise to loud protests from the British working people, who accused the Cabinet of having sabotaged the negotiations.

The firm stand taken by the USSR obliged the Labour Government to retreat. After a new round of talks between Henderson and Dovgalevsky on September 24 a protocol was finally signed on October 3, 1929 providing for the resolution of controversial issues still outstanding in the relations between the USSR and British Governments, after the restoration of diplomatic relations and exchange of ambassadors. On November 7, 1929 a Note from the British Government was delivered via the Norwegian diplomatic mission agreeing to the restoration of diplomatic relations with the USSR. On November 16, 1929 the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee appointed a Soviet Ambassador to Britain. This normalization of British-Soviet relations signified a major achievement for Soviet foreign policy, in its fight to uphold the cause of peace and friendship between the peoples, that was pursued steadily and consistently by the Soviet Government and the Communist Party.

Chapter 9

The Fascist Plague in Europe

The German Fascists Come to Power

At the beginning of January 1933, the villa of the Cologne banker, Kurt Schröder, was the scene of a secret meeting between leading German industrialists and bankers. These were attended by Karl Bosch, head of the concern IG Farbenindustrie, the armaments magnate Krupp, Fritz Thyssen who headed the Steel Trust, the "coal king" Emil Kirdorf and Schröder himself who maintained close links with American financiers. Also present were the experienced diplomatic agent Franz von Papen representing the aged President Hindenburg and former lance-corporal Schicklgruber—Adolf Hitler—leader of Germany's Nazi party.

The German industrialists and financiers at this meeting decided to encourage the Nazi party to take power and expressed their readiness to collaborate with the National-Socialists.

The German bourgeoisie felt that in order to maintain its own power there was only one thing it could do; to eliminate bourgeois freedoms, rob the Reichstag of any significance and help establish a terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, aggressive and chauvinistic elements from the world of finance capital.

At the end of January 1933 President Hindenburg appointed Hitler German Chancellor. This meant that the largest country in Europe was now ruled over by a party determined to do away with democratic freedoms, which advocated racial hatred for other peoples.

On the night of February 28 the German Reichstag was set alight on the instructions of the fascist leaders. This provocation opened the door to an unprecedentedly cruel campaign of terror against Communists and worker activists.

Hitler's government perpetrated blood-thirsty reprisals against all progressive forces in Germany, in particular the Communists.

In the torture-chambers of the Gestapo and the barracks of the SS blood flowed and there rang out the heart-rending cries of the tortured victims. Communists and Social Democrats were hanged and shot by their fascist persecutors. Thousands of the finest representatives of the German working class were shot without trial. After the emergence of the threat of war, fanned by Japanese militarists in the Far East in 1931, another potential seat of war had been created by the German fascists in the very heart of Europe.

At the beginning of the 1930s the most aggressive of the imperialist countries—fascist Germany and militarist Japan—felt sufficiently powerful to raise the question of partitioning the world in keeping with their growing economic, financial and military strength and the advance of their productive forces.

The imperialists of Britain, the United States and France had gone out of their way to resurrect an aggressive Germany and militarist Japan as weapons in their anti-Soviet policy. This had in fact been the main thrust of their foreign policy. They had spared no effort and devoted enormous resources to turning the Weimar Republic and later fascist Germany into a weapon in the fight against Soviet Russia. The monopolists and financiers of Britain—leading lights from Alfred Mond's Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), Henri Deterding, the oil king from Royal Dutch Shell, bosses from the French Comité de Forges, representatives of America's sixty families, financial magnates from the Big Five among Britain's banks, from US and French banks and many other enemies of peace and democracy were making ready to use German fascists and Japanese militarists as the shock troops of international reaction in their fight against the USSR.

Lord Lloyd, an influential Conservative and friend of Winston Churchill and Neville Chamberlain, formulated the anti-Soviet programme of the British monopolies that was supported by reactionaries from the United States and France at the beginning of 1934. Lloyd declared: "We give Japan freedom of action with regard to Russia... We open to Germany the way to the east by giving it a possibility of expansion." [1] Arthur Balfour, a leading British industrialist,

declared that Germany should be the main bulwark in the fight against communism.

The Dawes and Young plans and the Hoover Moratorium concerned with reparations and the resolutions adopted at the Lausanne Conference on questions of reparations had to a considerable degree facilitated the rebirth of Germany's military and industrial potential. The "golden rain" of British pounds and American dollars had boosted German industry and helped to turn its military potential into a mighty arsenal of planes, tanks and cannon.

The bourgeois historians and political analysts James Allen and Alan Bullock list highly eloquent figures in this connection. Between September 1924 and June 1931 Germany's reparation payments totalled close on 11 billion marks, but during the same period Germany received loans from abroad and investments of 25 billion.

According to the prominent British Conservative, Robert Boothby "from 1924 to 1929 a passion amounting almost to mania developed in the city of London for lending money to Germany." [2]

A leading role in the remilitarization of Germany and her provision with loans was that of the London Bank and its director Montague Norman along with the Big Five of the British banks--Barclays Bank, Lloyds Bank, and the National and Provincial Foreign Bank, to name but three. [3]

Thousands of millions of pounds and dollars flowed from the coffers of the City and Wall Street banks to the safes of German bankers, helping the imperialists in Germany to forge weapons for use against those who were giving them money. Bombs later to be dropped by the Luftwaffe on London and Coventry, Strasbourg and Dunkirk and by Japanese planes on Pearl Harbour and Manila were produced with British and American capital and delivered to their destinations on planes fuelled with petrol from the Anglo-Dutch oil trust of Henri Deterding and fuel from the US oil company Standard Oil. These companies also provided the German tank corps with petrol and other types of fuel and lubricants.

None other than British, French and American monopolies were the main suppliers of strategic raw materials to Germany and Japan. Iron ore and coke, cast iron and steel, copper and aluminium, rubber and nickel, tin and lead, tungsten and chromium, and other strategic raw materials

flowed forth in a steady stream from Britain, the United States and France to German and Japanese armaments factories.

On the eve of World War II the well-known British economist, Paul Einzig, was to write: "If the day of reckoning ever comes, the liberal attitude of the British Government in this matter may well be responsible for the lives of many British soldiers and civilians." [4]

This attitude was not liberal, but downright criminal in respect of the peoples of these countries. British and American monopolists and the owners of armaments factories did not only sell raw materials to Germany and Japan. Nobel's firm Vickers Armstrong, Ltd., Rolls Royce, Alfred Mond's ICI, Hawker and British Aluminium Company and many others conducted a secret but large-scale trade in arms, including military planes and artillery, with fascist Germany and Japan.

With the help of Britain and the United States Germany, despite the military restrictions imposed in the Treaty of Versailles, was building up a powerful airforce. Moreover, the British government helped train German airforce officers and allowed them to attend Royal Air Force manoeuvres. Despite the ban imposed by the Treaty of Versailles the German militarists, with the connivance of Britain, succeeded in building up a navy.

British monopolists and politicians through this contribution towards the rebuilding of Germany's military and industrial potential and their arming of the German fascists betrayed the cause of collective security, for which the USSR had campaigned so actively during the thirties and the years that followed. British industrialists and politicians on the other hand, basing their actions on a traditional policy in favour of a "balance of power" and using others to "pull their chestnuts out of the fire," had sought to set up an anti-Soviet bloc of states with the participation of Germany for a war against the USSR.

This was the main motive behind the policy of encouraging German aggression in the East, which later, however, was to be turned against Britain, the United States, France and other countries.

In rejecting the only correct path for withstanding the German threat against Britain and France—the organization of collective security and honest rapprochement with the largest country in the world, the USSR—the British and

French politicians dealt a fatal blow to the cause of peace in Europe and facilitated the unleashing of fascist aggression.

The anti-Soviet policy of the ruling circles in Britain, the United States and France, whose hostility to the Soviet state knew no bounds, was supported by the leaders of the Social Democratic parties, and, against a background of mounting aggression from German and Italian fascists and the Japanese militarists, constituted a betrayal of national interests.

Warning from British Intelligence

The British monopolists and the MacDonald Government, and later the Baldwin Government that followed it, contributed in no small way to the establishment of an anti-Soviet bloc in which Germany participated. Insofar as these countries were endeavouring to use Germany as a weapon in the fight against the USSR they did not prevent its blatant revision of the military clauses in the Treaty of Versailles and the rebuilding of the German army.

The British General Staff, British intelligence and British diplomats warned the government several times after 1930 of the imminent German threat,[5] of Germany's numerous violations of the Treaty of Versailles. The political leaders in the West, however, blinded as they were by their hatred for communism, hoped to channel fascist aggression to the East, against the USSR.

It was with this end in view that the proposals announced by the British Prime Minister MacDonald at the Disarmament Conference in Geneva on March 16, 1933, had been elaborated.

Fascist politicians were aiming to achieve parity in armaments with the main European powers. Yet MacDonald at the second session of this Disarmament Conference obligingly put forward a draft for a "disarmament" convention much to the liking of Hitler and his supporters. While providing for a curtailment of land forces in a number of European countries, MacDonald's draft granted Germany the right to have land forces numbering 200,000. This figure, however, that was double the limit for the German army laid down in the Treaty of Versailles, was still not enough to satisfy the fascist politicians.

In response to a memorandum from the British Govern-

ment sent to Germany on January 29, 1934 the German fascists openly stated their demands—to have an army 300,000 strong.[6]

Attempts by Britain, France, the United States and Italy to present a compromise solution to Germany, that would gradually do away with the restrictions on its armed forces met with a curt rebuff from Hitler's government. So as to give itself a free hand, the German government announced on October 14, 1933 that it was leaving the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference. This move was an open challenge delivered to the victor nations from German fascism, a challenge to the principles of the Treaty of Versailles, and a deliberate plot directed against the cause of peace.

A highly dangerous diplomatic combination of reactionary circles from Britain, France, Germany and Italy came together as the Pact of the Four signed on July 15, 1933 in Rome by the heads of these four states. So as to conclude this anti-Soviet pact the British Prime Minister had travelled to Rome, as a gesture to the fascist dictator Mussolini.

In view of the serious differences between the two imperialist groupings the Pact of Four was in fact not actually signed after all. Yet the tendency on the part of British and French politicians to use Germany as an advance guard in the "struggle against Bolshevism" was becoming more and more marked.

It would be naive to maintain that the British and French politicians and their masters from the City and the Comité de Forges did not understand the threat implicit in the re-emergence of German militarism. The reactionary politicians from Britain and France who advocated a deal with fascist Germany, whose nucleus was the notorious Cliveden clique, were opposed by this time by another group of more sober-minded politicians. The latter were aware of the enormous danger of the fascist threat and favoured consolidation of political ties between Britain and France, on the one hand, and the USSR, on the other, since the Soviet Union was a force capable of withstanding the fascist aggressors. The most prominent representatives of this second group in Britain were Duff Cooper, Leopold Emery, Lord Beaverbrook, Lloyd George, and in France they included Edouard Herriot, Louis Barthou and Anatole de Monzie. In a special Foreign Office memorandum presented to the British Cabinet on May 30, 1933 by the Foreign Secretary John Simon, refer-

ence was made to the danger stemming from an over-armed Germany, the abandonment of military restrictions, violations of the Treaty of Versailles and the Locarno Agreements.[7]

Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald himself, in a memorandum to the British Cabinet of December 8, 1933 wrote of the threat which an over-armed Germany represented for the United Kingdom and of the considerable danger inherent in the proposals made by Herr Hitler and in his intention to have a 300,000-strong army. MacDonald recommended that a special committee for the imperial defence of Britain draft appropriate preventive measures.[8]

At a meeting of the British Cabinet held on November 21, 1934 a special secret committee was set up, the German Re-armament Committee, consisting of the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Defence, the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for India. This Committee was called upon "to consider the question of German re-armament and in particular to bring together the available facts and figures regarding such re-armament and to make definite proposals to the Cabinet as to our future policy concerning the legislation of German re-armament."[9] On November 26, 1934 a special meeting of the British Cabinet was held to consider the report submitted by the above Committee. On November 22, 1934 the Committee assembled for an extraordinary meeting and considered a special memorandum submitted to it by the Admiralty, the Secretary of State for Defence, the Chiefs of Staff and British Intelligence overseas.

The memorandum contained what was referred to as the very latest information at the disposal of the British government in connection with the progress of Germany's re-armament.[10] The information was of a secret nature and not for publication. Not only did it confirm the intention of fascist Germany to have a 300,000-strong army on the basis of conscription but according to the secret information available to the British government Germany already had a 300,000-strong army consisting of three cavalry and 21 infantry divisions. In addition to this regular army numerous military organizations had been set up in Germany which provided military training. "In case of war ... the German Government would be in a position to raise from these sources considerable irregular formations to support the mobilised regular army."[11]

Fascist Germany, as the members of this Committee con-

firmed, had violated the resolutions of Versailles that had prohibited it from possessing an air force. It was pointed out in the memorandum: "Germany is at present actively engaged in creating an Air Force of considerable size and, moreover, of a considerable offensive nature." [12] According to secret British information Germany possessed a sizeable illegal airforce by the end of 1934, which numbered about 1,000 military planes and about 1,500 light planes and training craft.

In Germany according to the findings of the Committee a German illegal aviation industry was developing apace producing between 160 and 180 planes a month, including bombers of the latest design. Germany was also building secret aerodromes. The growth of the German army and airforce was proceeding so rapidly that soon the German troops would be able to cross borders, launch an offensive and "become a menace to the peace of Europe." Members of the Committee reported back to the Cabinet about the increasing militarization of fascist Germany, about the children marching "with hundreds of banners... on which death's-heads figured frequently, in addition to swastikas" and singing military songs poisoned by a philosophy of war. [13]

The Committee drew the following conclusions and made the following recommendations to the British Cabinet: "the evidence of German re-armament is now so formidable, that we feel it can no longer be officially ignored.... If the situation in Germany is allowed to develop without let or hindrance on present lines, the German forces may ultimately become a menace to the peace of Europe." [14] Yet instead of taking decisive action, that is, preventing the rearmament of Germany, the British government merely announced in the House of Commons during parliamentary debates on November 28, 1934 that Germany had violated the restrictions placed upon it in the Treaty of Versailles and was rapidly rebuilding up powerful armed forces. It was suggested that this information should be brought to the attention of the German Ambassador in London and also that the French and Italian ambassadors should be informed. [15]

It was inevitable that this rapid growth of Germany's armed might should alarm British politicians, particularly the creation of its airforce. Baldwin had good reason for pointing out in Parliament that the advent of aviation had

done away with the old concept of frontiers. He declared: "When you think of the defence of England you no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Dover; you think of the Rhine... That is where our frontier lies." [16]

However British ruling circles were still deriving comfort from the illusion that German bombs would not be dropped over London and Coventry, Birmingham and Manchester, but rather on Moscow and Minsk, Kiev and Smolensk. These illusions were to be cruelly shattered by the Nazis who were to unleash their war first of all against the West, against Britain and France.

The Final Abrogation by Germany of the Military Articles in the Treaty of Versailles

By the end of 1934 German re-armament was proceeding on such a wide scale and armaments being produced at such a rate that the Nazis decided once and for all to do away with the obstacles that the Treaty of Versailles had placed in their way with regard to armaments.

In order to receive the support of the Western powers in its move to declare null and void the military articles of the Treaty of Versailles, Joachim von Ribbentrop, one of the fascist leaders, visited London in November 1934, where he had talks with Foreign Secretary Simon and Lord Privy Seal, Anthony Eden. Ribbentrop presented the British politicians with promises of wide-scale Anglo-German agreements demanding in return parity in armaments for Germany. [17] The outcome of the talks was that the British Government gave its unofficial acceptance of legalization of Germany's re-armament. [18]

By the end of 1934 Germany's fascist government had prepared a secret plan for introducing general military service. The Nazis were intending to introduce this after the plebiscite in the Saar.

In January 1935 thanks to the cooperation of the British and French governments the Saar, which had been under League of Nations jurisdiction, was annexed to Hitler's Germany after a plebiscite had been held. Hitler's agents in this territory had instigated a cruel reign of terror against those opposed to the accession of the area to Germany. Insofar as the plan for the transfer of the Saar had been drawn up well in advance in London [19] the Nazis effected

the reannexation of this province with no trouble. This encouraged the ardour of those fascist politicians who had been declaring that the return to Germany of "all German lands" was essential. The paper *Münchener Zeitung* wrote that now when Germany had won back the Saar they should in the future take back Alsace and Lorraine, the Danzig Corridor, Memel and the Sudetenland.

The British government regarded the transfer of the Saar as a prerequisite for further negotiations with the Nazis about legalising German re-armament so that Hitler might direct his aggression to the East, against the USSR. It was with this aim in mind that Prime Minister MacDonald's friend Baron Allen of Hurtwood and Lord Lothian visited Berlin in January 1935. The pro-fascist sympathies of the latter were well known. Lothian and the group of reactionary politicians supporting him, particularly those belonging to the Cliveden clique, advocated the setting up of an anti-Soviet bloc, the nucleus of which should be an Anglo-German alliance. Hitler and Lothian discussed a plan for concluding a European pact.

It is not difficult to guess against whom such a pact would have been directed. Lothian described fascist Germany as "the bulwark of Europe . . . the protector of the new nations of Eastern Europe".[20]

The connivance of the Western powers, and in particular of Britain at the growth of German militarism meant that by the beginning of 1935 the Nazis had increased the size of their regular armed forces to 480,000, not counting the various semi-military formations which numbered close on two million members. By the end of 1935 Germany could field an army of between two and a half and three million men, in other words an army greater than that of Britain and France combined. The fascists had exceeded the number of military contingents—100,000 men—laid down in the Treaty of Versailles 25-30 times over:

The Anglo-French talks in London held during February 1-3, 1935 between the heads of government and foreign ministers (Flandin and Laval on the French side and MacDonald and Simon for Britain) represented another step along the path of German remilitarization.

The British politicians made careful preparations for these talks: a special meeting of the British Cabinet was called on January 14, 1935. On January 17th the Lord President of the Council (during the Prime Minister's ab-

sence) convened a special meeting of senior members of the Admiralty, the Chief of Staff, the Chief Air Marshal, Secretary to the Cabinet Maurice Hankey and Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Robert Vansittart.[21] Particular attention was paid to questions of ensuring Britain's security and the growth of German armaments. Once again British politicians drew solace from illusions regarding Germany's "peaceful" intentions.

At the above-mentioned London meeting between MacDonald and Flandin Britain and France, instead of concluding an agreement providing for mutual assistance, suggested that regional pacts be signed allowing for direct and active cooperation with Germany.

The London communiqué that was issued after these talks proposed that an air pact be concluded between Britain, France, Belgium, Italy and Germany; that a Danube Pact be signed guaranteeing Austria's independence and also an Eastern Pact; that the Eastern Pact be signed and that Germany be readmitted to the League of Nations.

The governments of Britain and France expressed their readiness to revoke the military restrictions laid down in the Treaty of Versailles. This was in practice a new step towards the capitulation of Britain and France to Nazi Germany.

These actions on the part of the Western states were viewed by the Soviet government as a rejection of collective security and an attempt on the part of Britain to conspire with Germany against the USSR, to render ineffective the Eastern Pact which had been initially proposed by the USSR in October 1933 in the context of an all-European agreement.[22] The Soviet government turned on several occasions to Britain and France with the proposal that they should make a resolute stand in favour of collective security and in particular in defence of the principle underlying the Eastern Pact. The Soviet government also put forward the idea of the world's indivisibility advocating a single plan for the establishment of security in Europe.[23]

The refusal to sign the Eastern Pact and attempts to replace it with "regional agreements" directed against the USSR, that Britain and France favoured, meant a refusal to defend the principles of collective security. Admittedly mention was still being made at the secret meetings of the British Cabinet by British politicians and military leaders of the rapidly growing German threat and the fact that

Germany cancelled the military restrictions stipulated at Versailles. Matters went no further, however, than the expression of well-meaning hopes to contain German re-armament. On February 14, 1935 a special secret *White Paper on Imperial Defence* was submitted at the request of the Prime Minister to the Cabinet. The Prime Minister, the Lord President of the Council, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State for Defence, the Parliamentary Secretary of State for the Royal Air Force, the First Lord of the Admiralty, the three Chiefs of Staff, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and other persons in responsible positions participated in the compiling of this document. [24]

The *White Paper* contained a special announcement regarding "imperial defence" and the policy of the British government in this sphere. Mention was made of the efforts to pacify Germany, of the steps taken by Britain and other countries to bring Germany back into the "family of nations." Once again it stressed the danger of Germany's intention to re-arm on a broad scale, particularly with regard to aviation. Those compiling the document were well aware that if German re-armament were to continue at the same high level and on an increasingly wide scale not subject to control, this would be a cause of mounting alarm to Germany's neighbours and might as a result give rise to a situation dangerous for the world as a whole. [25] The members of the Cabinet proposed that certain steps be taken to strengthen Britain's "imperial defence," with regard to all three forces.

While British and French politicians were merely confirming the growing threat from Germany and making pacifist speeches, the Nazi leaders were re-arming. In March 1935, the leaders of fascist Germany deemed that their position was sufficiently strong no longer to conceal their armaments. On March 16, 1935 they reintroduced general conscription.

Before this law was introduced, on March 9 German leaders made a careful study of public opinion in the British and French "rear". On March 9 Hitler and his colleagues also announced that a German airforce was being set up. Insofar as no protest was forthcoming in Britain and France after that, Germany's fascist government then proceeded to make public the Law on German Re-armament after which the Nazis began openly to re-arm and made the re-

building of the army and the airforce. The last obstacle impeding their preparation for war had been removed.

After being informed of the new law introduced by the Nazi government, Ramsay MacDonald, John Simon, Anthony Eden and Robert Vansittart came together at a Cabinet meeting of March 18, 1935 to discuss the new situation.[26] It was decided to convey to the German government not a protest, but a mere objection on Britain's part to this unilateral violation by Germany of the military articles in the Treaty of Versailles, insofar as actions of this kind might lead to "unrest in Europe."

Moreover it was also decided at the meeting of the British Cabinet that the visit Simon and Eden planned to make to Germany for talks with Hitler would not be postponed, since, according to the British politicians involved in these decisions, the German declaration had made "direct contacts" between Hitler and the British government all the more indispensable.

Simon and Eden's Talks with Hitler in Berlin

Controversy quickly arose over Simon and Eden's visit to Berlin. Many politicians and businessmen regarded the trip as unnecessary. They felt it would deal a harmful blow to British prestige and more important still that it would be a waste of time. Simon himself hesitated as to whether he ought to travel or not.

Heated discussions on matters of foreign policy were held in the House of Commons on March 21. Labour and Liberal leaders, not to mention right-wing Conservatives, approved of Simon's trip to Berlin. Simon announced to Parliament the programme that had been drawn up for the Berlin talks: exchange of views on the subjects of security, exchange of views on the armaments, on the proposed Air Pact and the re-admission of Germany into the League of Nations.[27] Simon made no mention of the Eastern and Danube pacts, thus demonstrating to Hitler Germany that Britain intended to set up a bloc of states that did not involve the USSR. The talks held between Simon and Eden on the British side and Hitler, Baron von Neurath and Ribbentrop on the German side lasted for two days (March 25 and 26, 1935).[28] There were morning and evening sessions on both days which lasted up to seven hours. From the very outset

these talks assumed an anti-Soviet flavour and Simon and Eden listened respectfully to provocative statements made by the Nazi leader. Hitler lied about his peaceful intentions. The motif running through all his statements was the assertion that Germany and the whole of Europe needed to defend themselves against the "Bolshevik menace." [29] Hitler depicted Germany as the main bastion and defender of European civilization.

This was allegedly why Germany should be given the chance to re-arm. Hitler declared that this was why he could not sign an Eastern Pact which provided for a system of mutual assistance involving the Soviet Union. Germany, he reminded his listeners, neither wished for help from the USSR and still less did it want to support the USSR in the event of armed conflict. "Germany," he roared, "was more afraid of Russian protection than of a French attack." [30]

This was why Hitler said he could not sign an agreement like the Eastern Pact. [31] So as to stifle the Eastern Pact in bureaucracy Hitler sent the British ministers a note via Neurath, in which he proposed something like an arbitration or conciliatory treaty obliging signatories not to support the attack of a third party on each other, if conflict were to arise. The end product of this exchange was a totally meaningless document, a bureaucratic nicety from Hitler and Neurath. Hitler regarded it as unnecessary and undesirable to sign a Central European or Danube Pact and he attempted to reduce it to nothing through arguments over the definition of "non-interference." [32] During the talks about arms Hitler not only failed to express the slightest intention to disarm, but instead, playing on the anti-Soviet attitudes of the British politicians he demanded that the German army be increased to 550,000. He again alarmed the British politicians by reminding them that 36 German divisions were faced by 101 Red Army divisions and 34 French ones. The Germans demanded parity in armaments, tanks, heavy artillery and other types of offensive weaponry. Once again Simon and Eden did not protest against the violation of the Treaty of Versailles.

Hitler demanded the right to increase Germany's navy. The tonnage of the German fleet was officially to remain at 35 per cent of the British fleet for all time. [33] Simon and Eden in their turn cordially invited Hitler to consider the question of Germany's naval armaments at the forthcoming London Conference, closing their eyes to the fact that Ger-

many's fleet represented a threat to the centre of the British Empire, to Britain's communications in the North Sea, the English Channel, particularly in the Straits of Dover.

With regard to building up of an airforce Hitler announced that the German Luftwaffe had now achieved parity with the British and French airforces. He refused outright to limit the escalation of Germany's airforce. According to German figures the British airforce (including reserves numbered 2,100 planes and the French airforce 6,000 by April 1935.[34]

The proposal put forward by Simon for the conclusion of an air pact between the European countries which would condemn as illegitimate "indiscriminate attacks from the air upon the civil population and industrial areas"[35] was virtually brushed to one side by Hitler.

Simon went out of his way to convince Hitler that it was essential for Germany to come back into the League of Nations, since "it could never be effective if it did not include at last all the European nations." Hitler graciously agreed to comply with this request but on condition that Britain and France give back the former German colonies.[36]

Simon not only failed to snub claims of this sort from Hitler, as he was later to assert in the House of Commons, but gave Hitler to understand that the British government was ready to return to discussion of the colonial question.[37]

Finally at the end of the Berlin talks between Simon and Hitler, the latter directly hinted at the matter of the annexation of Austria and Memel region by Germany and virtually gained British approval for his future seizure of Austria.

The Berlin talks between Simon and Hitler ended with conventional expressions of thanks from the Führer and the British politicians.

The Berlin talks between Hitler and Simon were one of the first attempts by British politicians to achieve wide-ranging Anglo-German agreement. They provided a clear demonstration of the anti-Soviet tendencies in British politics to encourage, appease and conspire with the fascist aggressors. Even before the talks had begun an article appeared in *Pravda* noting that an attempt would be made in Berlin to bury the Eastern Pact providing for mutual assistance, and to draw up an agreement between Britain and Germany aimed against the USSR.[38] Later it was pointed out once again in *Pravda* that an extremely detailed plan

for unleashing war in the East of Europe had been laid before the British ministers by the German fascists. The question of the USSR was in the forefront of their attention.[39] This was also reiterated in the communist press in Britain.

The Anglo-German talks between Simon and Hitler were an attempt by British politicians to scheme with Nazi Germany so as to draw it into an anti-Soviet bloc of imperialist states. To this end the British politicians facilitated the further remilitarization of Nazi Germany on land, sea and in the air.

British imperialism had dealt a new blow at the system of collective security in Europe, of which the Eastern Pact was a key component.

Eden's Visit to Moscow

Simon's Berlin talks with Hitler did not resolve, and indeed could not have resolved, the growing imperialist contradictions between Britain and Germany. The course of the talks showed that Hitler was demanding further unobstructed remilitarization—a larger fleet, army and air force.

Hitler's colonial claims were a source of particular anxiety to the British since these came into conflict with the immediate interests of the British Empire. When it had just been a matter of Germany's reviewing the borders of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Lithuania, the British politicians had taken all this in their stride. Yet their composure disappeared as soon as the Nazis tried to encroach upon Britain's colonial interests.

This led Simon and Eden to start talking about the disappointing results of their Berlin visit and to maintain that no real progress had been made at the talks.

The British people condemned the dangerous overtures that Simon had been making to the German fascists. They demonstrated in favour of consolidating collective security and friendly relations with the USSR. In this situation the government decided to go ahead with the planned visit to Moscow to be undertaken by Lord Privy Seal, Anthony Eden.

On March 28, 1935 Anthony Eden arrived in Moscow from Berlin where he had been taking part in the talks with Hitler alongside Simon. It was the first visit to the USSR by

a British minister during the 18 years that Soviet Russia had been in existence.

On that same day there took place a meeting between Eden and Maxim Litvinov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. Their talks lasted for two hours during which Litvinov and Eden exchanged information and voiced their opinions on topical issues connected with the international situation. Eden briefed Litvinov in particular about the nature of the negotiations in Berlin between Simon and Hitler.[40] The two sides discussed the conclusions which ought to be drawn on the basis of the negotiations in Berlin.

The British minister had previously let it slip that Britain did not intend to take on any obligations in connection with the organization of collective security. What was more Eden was deliberately trying to play down and justify the aggressive intentions of the fascist politicians. In response to this Litvinov made it clear that the Soviet government "did not have the slightest doubt about Germany's aggressive stance" since "German foreign policy drew its inspiration from two main ideas—revanchism and the desire to dominate Europe."[41]

The Soviet Government warned that armed aggression of the German militarists was a threat not only to the countries of the East of Europe and the USSR, but also to the countries in the West. Litvinov pointed out: "It is perfectly possible, indeed probable that the first blow will not be dealt against the USSR.... Germany knows full well the strength of the Red Army. Germany has not forgotten the lessons of history... Indeed Hitler, by laying ... special emphasis on expansion eastwards is seeking to catch out the Western states and extract from them approval for his armaments plans. When the re-armament reaches what Hitler views as a desirable level, the guns can start shooting in quite a different direction."[42]

Subsequent events bore out completely these conclusions and warnings voiced by the Soviet government. Yet during his talks in Moscow not only did Eden fail to draw any of the necessary conclusions from these warnings, but he also attempted to play down the threat of German aggression against the USSR, as a result of which the Soviet government, as Litvinov pointed out, had gained the impression that the British government simply does not believe in

Germany's aggressiveness. Eden was to reply with the statement that people in Britain really are not so convinced of Germany's aggressiveness as people in the USSR. [43]

How cruelly Hitler and history were later to laugh at the misjudged forecasts of the British politicians priding themselves on their diplomatic skills in predicting the course of events! Historical documents now bear irrefutable witness to their clumsiness and contradictory tactics and most important of all to the double game played by British diplomats who bore no small measure of the responsibility for the unleashing of the Second World War.

On March 29 a meeting was held in the Kremlin between Stalin, Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, and Litvinov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs (on the Soviet side) and Anthony Eden and Chilston, then British Ambassador in the USSR (on the British side). The meeting lasted for over an hour. [44] The two sides exchanged opinions on international issues, in particular the Eastern Pact and other questions outlined in an Anglo-French communiqué of February 3, 1935.

The Soviet representatives were firmly convinced that "in the present international situation more than ever before it is essential to continue to make every effort to set up a system of collective security in Europe." [45]

Stalin asked Eden straight out how he assessed the international situation and whether he regarded it as very dangerous or not. [46]

Eden replied that he saw the international situation as worrying but not hopeless. Stalin, however, pointed out that he saw the situation more serious than in 1913. When Eden asked why this was so, Stalin replied that in 1913 there had only been one seat of war—Germany, whereas now there were two—Germany and Japan. [47]

Stalin also pointed out that the Soviet government could not be satisfied with merely a non-aggression pact with Germany. To ensure peace a firmer guarantee was required and that could only be provided by the Eastern Pact for mutual asistance. [48]

In their talks with Eden the leaders of the Soviet state underlined that the organization of a security system in Eastern Europe and the planned mutual assistance pact were aimed, not at isolating or encircling any other state but at providing guarantees for equal levels of security for all signatories of such a pact, and if Germany and Poland

were to be involved that would be welcomed by all countries of Europe. [49]

Eden tried to assure the leaders of the Soviet state that the policy of the British government was that of peace. [50] He welcomed the peace-loving policies of the Soviet government which gave its total support to the system of collective security. [51] In the course of these talks with Eden aspects of the development of British-Soviet relations were also touched upon.

In the final communiqué agreed on March 31, 1935 summing up the ground covered at this meeting between Soviet leaders and Eden it was noted that the two sides "were more firmly than ever convinced that friendly cooperation between the two countries in the common cause of upholding peace and organizing a collective system of security was of prime importance for the further activization of international efforts to this end." [52]

Even the Conservative British press was unable to ignore the sincerity of the Soviet people's striving for peace and their efforts to consolidate collective security. The London *Times* wrote that all competent observers were convinced of one thing, namely, that Russia was now striving for peace and that Russian people were worried by Germany's aggressive intentions towards Russia. [53]

As the future was to show, the British ruling circles did not decide to take steps to consolidate collective security but instead opted for the difficult and slippery path of deals with the German aggressors and further connivance at the militarist plans of the fascist states.

Once again the Soviet policy of campaigning for collective security met with no support from British statesmen, who were still hoping, as before, to settle Anglo-German differences in the wake of a clash between Germany and the USSR.

Eden's Talks in Warsaw and Prague

From Moscow Eden set out for Warsaw where he had a meeting with Colonel Beck, the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs and had an audience with Piłsudski. Eden tried to clarify Poland's attitude to the Eastern Pact. Beck made out to Eden that the basis for its practical implementation had not yet been elaborated, as the Polish Government, which had concluded the Berlin agreement with Hitler pro-

viding for peaceful settlement of differences, refused categorically to involve itself in the Eastern Pact.

During Eden's meeting with Piłsudski, the latter was not merely reluctant to discuss the matter of organizing collective security in Europe, but even advised the British to concern themselves with their colonies rather than with European affairs. [54]

The short-sighted policy of the Polish leaders following the lead of Nazi Germany was paid for dearly in 1939 and in the years that followed by the Polish people, which was to become the first victim of the German fascists.

From Warsaw Eden went on to Prague where, on April 4, he met with Eduard Benes, the Foreign Minister, and Jan Masaryk, Czechoslovakia's special envoy in London. The politicians of Czechoslovakia were more keenly aware of the dangers inherent in Nazi Germany's aggressive intentions towards their country. This explains why they supported the idea of an Eastern Pact. Benes made it quite clear to Eden that he was in favour of "a general pact, based on the Covenant [of the League of Nations.—*F.V.*], of which the parties might be France, Russia, the Baltic States, Czechoslovakia and Roumania and which would stand open for others." [55]

Benes pointed out that "it would be disastrous to leave Russia in isolation, for then she would make an agreement with Germany." [56] Benes' utterances at this time betrayed an unmistakable fear of the growing aggression on the part of the German fascists. He gave voice to his fears with regard to the possibility of an Anschluss and violations of the "independence and sovereignty of Austria" which might well be seized by Germany, which in its turn would seriously undermine Czechoslovakia's own strategic position. Benes pointed out how important it was for the Little Entente countries that they should sign a Central European Pact. [57]

After his talks with Eden, Benes declared himself to be convinced that "the Little Entente countries should labour under no illusion as to the chances of that country signing a collective security treaty to which Germany refused to adhere." [58]

Indeed the British statesmen were proceeding further and further down the road of dubious dealing with the fascist aggressors.

The German imperialists sought to restore Germany's naval might, seeing this to be an important prerequisite for the achievement of world domination.

Yet the German Nazis, relying on the anti-Soviet aspirations of the British imperialists, announced that Germany needed a fleet to ensure its domination of the Baltic and for its struggle against the USSR.

On the eve of the ensuing Anglo-German talks Hitler made a speech on May 10 containing virulent attacks against the USSR. Once again he demanded that he be given a free hand in the East, declaring that he would never sign a mutual assistance pact with the USSR. Hitler declared that he would rather hang than sign such a pact. Leading statesmen back in London, in particular Ramsay MacDonald, John Simon and Stanley Baldwin, gave statements such as these a rapturous welcome.

In June 1935 British-German naval talks began at the Foreign Office. Germany's representative, Ribbentrop, on Hitler's instructions demanded that the strength of the German Navy might constitute 35 per cent of the total naval strength of the British Empire.[59] First Lord of the Admiralty, Eyres Monsell and Foreign Secretary, John Simon, who were chairing the talks, at the recommendation of naval HQ agreed to satisfy this demand of Germany. The Admiralty considered that the suggested proportions of the British and German navies might be viewed as strategically plausible and acceptable.

On June 18, 1935 a British-German naval agreement was adopted via an exchange of Notes. The correlation between the two fleets was fixed: 35 per cent for Germany and 100 per cent for Britain.

British politicians and military commanders drew consolation from the fact that Germany would only be able to complete its programme of naval expansion by 1943.[60]

British politicians and military leaders were in the meantime also creating favourable opportunities for Germany to attack the north-western territories of the USSR. After the British-German naval agreement Germany was able, without let or hindrance, to build up its land forces, air forces and a more modern navy. This state of affairs led public opinion world-wide, and in Britain in particular, to see in the 1935 agreement a new step on the path to world war.

The *Daily Worker* wrote: "The British-German naval agreement is the first fruit of the new and more openly anti-Soviet Baldwin government." [61]

This agreement went against Britain's national interests. Even Conservative politicians, including Churchill and Lord Beaverbrook, regarded its signing as a serious mistake of the first order. At the meeting with the Soviet ambassador in London on July 14, 1935 Churchill declared that Germany represented a great danger to the British Empire and that its first blow would probably not be dealt at the USSR, as that would involve a good deal of risk, but in other directions. [62] This direction might well be and indeed was the West.

The Soviet government, aware of the danger implicit in Germany's remilitarization, vehemently criticized the agreement between Britain and Germany, viewing its signing as a hostile act with regard to the USSR. The British-German naval agreement dealt a further blow to the system of collective security and the cause of peace in Europe. The British Government continued however to pursue the slippery path of trying to achieve a broad-based British-German deal.

The USSR Signs Treaties with France and Czechoslovakia

While British foreign policy was aimed at channelling fascist aggression against the USSR, the Soviet Union was, as before, directing its efforts towards setting up a collective security front and consolidating peace. As early as 1932 a Franco-Soviet non-aggression pact had been signed. A further step in this direction was taken when a Franco-Soviet mutual assistance treaty was signed on May 2, 1935.

The question of concluding a treaty for mutual assistance between the USSR and France had been raised as early as 1934, on the basis of the talks held to discuss the conclusion of the Eastern Pact. Foreign Minister Barthou had campaigned for such a treaty to be signed. Barthou had, however, been killed in October 1934 in Marseilles by Nazi hirelings from the Croatian fascist organization led by a captain from the Austrian army Ante Pawelic (the threads of the conspiracy in this murder led to Berlin and Rome via the German major, Speidel, who had served as German military attache in Paris). Pierre Laval, who took over from

Barthou as Minister for Foreign Affairs, went out of his way to block the signing of this treaty with the USSR. Pierre Laval went down in history as a betrayer of France who served her arch-enemy—Nazi Germany.

Meanwhile a powerful movement was gaining ground in France, a movement that was directed against the growing fascist threat and that supported the setting up of a Popular Front, and peace and friendship with the USSR. Although Laval had made it clear to the fascist dictators that he planned to work for the isolation of the USSR and did his best to exacerbate German-Soviet relations, under pressure from the popular masses he was obliged to continue Barthou's work and sign the treaty for mutual assistance with the USSR.

On March 29, 1935 the Soviet ambassador in France, V. P. Potyomkin, on the instructions of the USSR Government, raised with Laval the question of signing a Franco-Czech-Soviet mutual assistance treaty. Laval sought to avoid the issue, declaring that he himself was in favour of such a pact but that France did not want to be drawn into a war.[63] Once again under pressure from public opinion he agreed to elaborate concrete proposals. On March 30 Laval submitted a draft for bilateral agreements to the Soviet ambassador in Paris.

The Soviet government sought to have incorporated into the pact a point providing for the rendering of immediate assistance in the case of blatant aggression before the passing of any resolution by the Council of the League of Nations. This important point however received no mention in Laval's draft.

On April 15, 1935 the Soviet draft for the pact was handed to Laval in Geneva where the talks were being held. A bitter struggle then began, both within France and beyond its borders, between those in favour of such a pact and those opposed to the conclusion of a Franco-Soviet mutual assistance treaty.

The British government brought strong pressure to bear on France, trying to obstruct the signing of the mutual assistance treaty between the USSR and France, insofar as it would be an obstacle on the path to British-German-French rapprochement.

On April 30 in a letter to the Soviet ambassador in London, the Foreign Office made it quite clear that Britain would be obliged under the terms of the Locarno Treaty to

come to Germany's aid if France were to attack her.[64] The point at issue here was not that France was planning to attack Germany but Britain's endeavour to stop France helping the USSR in the event of a German attack. The Soviet Ambassador in London pointed out in no uncertain terms to Vansittart during their meeting on May 1, 1935, that the British government had taken this step so as, if not to disrupt the Franco-Soviet negotiations, at least to impede their smooth progress.[65] This approach to the problem made it quite clear that Britain was anxious to prevent the signing of the treaty between France and the USSR.

In his turn Laval hoped to achieve a more advantageous deal with Nazi Germany by blackmailing Hitler through this closer contact with the USSR. During the negotiations the Soviet diplomats exposed the double game played by Laval and his followers and secured the signing of the mutual assistance treaty with France.

The treaty stipulated that in the event of an act of aggression from any European state directed against either of the signatories, France and the USSR would afford each other immediate assistance and support. The treaty did not rule out or belittle the importance of the urgent need for implementation of a regional Eastern Pact. This was made clear by the leaders of the Soviet state to Pierre Laval during his negotiations in Moscow that took place on May 13-15, 1933. Nevertheless Germany, with Britain's complicity put paid to the conclusion of an Eastern Pact. Talks about the signing of such a pact were not reopened.

Continuing its tireless struggle for the setting up of a collective security front the USSR succeeded in signing a mutual assistance treaty with Czechoslovakia on May 16, 1935 that was identical to the treaty it had signed with France. On the initiative of the Czechoslovakian government, however, the following point was included in the protocol: both governments declared that the obligations to afford assistance to each other would only be valid between them if the conditions outlined in the treaty applied and the help to the party that was victim of the attack would be afforded by France.[66] The effectiveness of the Soviet-Czech treaty would depend upon France.

The treaties with France and Czechoslovakia could have become an important instrument in the struggle against the fascist aggressors, but through the fault of the ruling circles in these countries they were not implemented in prac-

tice. The French government avoided signing a military convention about the forms, conditions and scale of military assistance, without which the mutual assistance agreement was invalid. Laval went out of his way to obstruct the ratification of the Franco-Soviet treaty and it was only ratified by the Sarraut government in February 1936 after the resignation of Laval.

The Soviet Government used every opportunity, however small, to consolidate collective security. During his visit to London in 1936 Litvinov expressed his interest in concluding a treaty for mutual assistance with Britain, similar to the Franco-Soviet treaty. The British government did not accept the proposal. On February 5, 1936 an official meeting took place between Britain's Secretary of State for Defence, Duff Cooper, and the Soviet Ambassador Ivan Maisky, and Marshal Tukhachevsky, during which Cooper himself referred to the usefulness of concluding such a pact, similar to the one which the USSR had signed with France.[67] Cooper, however, was obliged to admit the reluctance of a certain section of the country's ruling circles to conclude a mutual assistance treaty with the USSR or to publish a joint declaration involving Britain, France and the USSR covering questions connected with the fight for peace and the campaign to prevent war.

British Encouragement for Mussolini

The international situation which had taken shape by the mid-1930s and the emergence of potential seats of war in the Far East and in Europe, Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations and the growth of German militarism and revanchism all made for a very tense atmosphere in Europe and in the rest of the world. Once again, as on the eve of the First World War cliques in favour of war and revenge had come to the fore, in particular the militarist parties of Germany and Japan. A new partition of the world was underway involving open military adventures on the part of the imperialists. One of the first countries to indulge in open aggression was fascist Italy.

The new British government of Stanley Baldwin that came to power in June 1935 was in favour of much more close dealings with the fascist aggressors. During parliamentary debate on matters of foreign policy held on July

11, 1935 the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Samuel Hoare, publicly and cynically accepted the need for Italian expansion.[68]

Before invading Ethiopia Mussolini asked MacDonald what Britain thought of this plan. MacDonald replied: "England is a lady. A lady's taste is for vigorous action by the male, but she likes things done discreetly—not in public. So be tactful, and we shall have no objection."[69] Pro-fascist Laval during his visit to Mussolini in January 1935 also voiced his approval of the seizure of Ethiopia.

The fact that a similar position was adopted by reactionary circles in a number of countries encouraged the expansion by the Italian fascists. On October 3, 1935 Italy, like a thief in the night, invaded Ethiopia without so much as declaring war. A new theatre of war appeared on the sea routes leading from Europe to Asia.

The political result of the British-French policy of encouraging Italian aggression was the consolidation of the strength of the fascist invaders. The consolidation of the fascist regimes was all aimed at one and the same thing—building up the forces of fascism for a future war against the USSR.

The Soviet Union was the only state which unequivocally opposed the aggression of the Italian fascists, calling for the complete independence of Ethiopia on the basis of equal rights. During the whole of the war between Italy and Ethiopia the USSR energetically implemented economic sanctions against Italy including those with regard to oil, carrying out all the resolutions adopted by the League of Nations.

Operation Schulung

The fact that the Italian aggressor had gone unpunished and indeed even been encouraged in their aggression whetted the appetites of the Nazi politicians in Germany for new military adventures. This was made clear by the remilitarization of the Rhine zone by Nazi Germany. According to the Treaty of Versailles Germany was forbidden to station its troops and set up military installations on the territory between the Rhine and the Franco-Belgian border and in a fifty-kilometer zone along the Eastern bank of the Rhine.

The Nazis held it to be essential that their Western bor-

ders be strengthened and remilitarized so that they might later channel their aggressive policy against Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and, most important of all, against the USSR. In this endeavour they had the total support of reactionary circles in Britain.

At the beginning of February 1936 the Marquis of Londonderry, one of the most prominent supporters of rapprochement between Britain and Germany, visited Berlin, where he was given a friendly welcome by Hitler and Goering. Hitler spoke of the need to isolate Moscow and Goering of the need to remilitarize the Rhine zone. Later the Marquis of Londonderry conveyed to Hitler, through Ribbentrop, the news that the German leaders' wishes had met with a favourable reception in London.

The plan to seize and remilitarize the Rhine zone was code-named "Operation Schulung." It was to be carried out as a surprise strike with lightning speed after the transmission of a pre-arranged signal to carry out Schulung.

At dawn on March 7 this signal was transmitted to the commanders of the German units who had previously been issued with closed envelopes marked: "To be opened at the appearance of French troops." Inside the envelopes was a command instructing the Germans to retreat into their own territory if French troops came into sight. The need to open the envelopes did not, however, arise. As Hitler was later to explain to the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg: "We marched on the Rhine land with a handful battalions, that was the time I risked everything. If France had stopped us then we would have had to retreat..." [70] French troops did not, however, appear in the Rhine zone. Ruling circles in Britain and France offered no resistance whatsoever to the Nazis, although the importation of Nazi troops into the Rhine zone and the strengthening of Germany's western borders represented a real threat to Belgium, France and Britain.

On the morning of March 7 a memorandum was sent to the ambassadors of those powers which had signed the Treaty of Locarno informing them that Germany now rejected those agreements. Contrary to the truth it was stated in the Memorandum that the intention of the French government to conclude the mutual assistance treaty with the USSR had created an entirely new situation and destroyed the political system of the Locarno Treaty. [71]

The British government only condemned verbally Ger-

many's one-sided annulment of the Locarno Treaty and the occupation of the Rhine zone. On March 9 the Baldwin government announced to Parliament that the occupation of the demilitarized Rhine zone did not create a threat of war. In a memorandum to the Cabinet on March 9 Eden suggested that a long-term and binding agreement be concluded with Germany, since it was a feasible possibility. British politicians followed a course of appeasement rather than attempting to hold in check the aggressors.

The French government, although it manifested great concern at this blatant violation of the Locarno and Versailles Treaties, nevertheless, did not consider it necessary either to announce mobilization or to introduce their own armed forces into the Rhine zone. London was particularly anxious to prevent that latter step since failure of the Rhine venture might have undermined the Nazi regime in Germany as a whole. In a special memorandum submitted to the Cabinet Eden suggested that Western Europe's interests would be well served by the conclusion of a non-aggression treaty between Germany and France, Belgium and, possibly, Holland. Eden suggested that the Locarno agreements be reaffirmed by those powers that were signatories to them and that there be "revision of the status of the Rhineland on the basis of equality of rights of neighbouring states." [72] This move the British government sought to present as an attempt to reshape international relations.

The British ambassador in Berlin reported to London that Hitler was satisfied with the position Britain had adopted and with her attempts to persuade the French to be moderate in connection with the seizure of the Rhineland. This was the background against which the Session of the League of Nations' Council, opened in London on March 18, announced a resolution which merely noted the fact of Germany's violation of Article 43 in the Treaty of Versailles and the Locarno agreements.

Only the Soviet delegate Litvinov announced the Soviet Union's demand that the aggressor be held in check and that the principle of the inviolability of international treaties be upheld: he condemned the West's endeavour to bring about collective capitulation in face of the aggressor, calling upon the rest of Europe to take decisive action so as to restrain the powers of war. The Soviet delegate warned the Western powers about the danger inherent in emergent

German militarism, not only for the USSR but also for the Western powers themselves.

The Soviet government underlined that only urgent consolidation of collective security, ready to respond to every new aggression on Germany's part with decisive measures could lead Hitler to admit that peace is, after all, more advantageous than war. The Western powers showed no enthusiasm for implementing such decisive measures.

In the course of the debates on foreign policy that took place on March 26 in the British Parliament representatives of the government once again voiced their intentions to pursue a policy of "appeasement" in Europe by continuing talks with Hitler. In the declarations by members of the government particular emphasis was laid on Britain's reluctance to take on any obligations with regard to organizing security measures in Eastern Europe. [73]

Berlin Aggressors and London "Appeasers"

As they made ready to fight for a repartition of the world and openly defied the Treaty of Versailles, the German fascists continued with their arms race, their militarization of the country, their efforts to effect broad-scale ideological preparation for war and to brain-wash German youth.

The introduction in August 1936 of a new law to extend the period of service for conscripts in the German Army from one year to two enabled Nazi Germany by the end of 1936 to build up the regular army to between 700,000 and 800,000 men: it now numbered 14 army corps and one cavalry brigade. The Wehrmacht possessed no less than 1,500 tanks, approximately 4,500 aeroplanes, of which 1,900 were first-line fighters. According to figures compiled by British intelligence Germany had by this time 5,100 trained pilots. [74] Military aerodromes were being built all over Germany (there were more than 400), strategic motorways leading towards the West, to the borders of Belgium, France and Holland, and military fortifications.

Many British politicians and diplomats were aware of the growing threat of fascist aggression. Yet the conclusions drawn from the available facts were often false ones. The main miscalculation on the part of Western politicians was their failure to foresee Hitler's aggressive intentions.

Their mistake lay in the fact that they started out from the conviction that Hitler would set alight the torch of war in the East, not in the West, in their own homes.

Eric Phipps, British ambassador to Berlin kept informing London of the growing German threat and the nature of its weapons. As early as November 1935 he reported to London: "The present Ethiopian imbroglio is mere child's play compared with the German problem that will, in some not very distant future, confront His Majesty's Government." [75]

In a memorandum submitted to the British Cabinet on February 3, 1936 by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Robert Vansittart there is to be found a somewhat gloomy, but exact picture of the relations between Britain, France and Germany drawn from reports made by British diplomats and intelligence findings: the memorandum also contained an analysis of European and world politics and the prospects for European development. Vansittart reported with alarm the collapse of the Versailles Treaty, Germany's re-armament, which it no longer bothered to hide, and that Germany of 1936 was "stronger, than the Germany of 1914." Vansittart wrote that Germany had virtually finished re-armament, becoming more and more dangerous, demanding that its claims be met. [76]

Summing up the reports from diplomats and British intelligence Vansittart described the wide-scale militarization of Germany in the following terms: "Armed forces, diplomacy, civil service, industries, commerce, education, religion, labour are all being forced into the same channel and being made subservient to the same aim to make Germany ... by far the strongest Power in Europe."

Vansittart made it clear that Germany's political plans included not merely the absorption of Austria but also parts of Czechoslovakia, Eupen and Malmedy, Schleswig and the Polish part of Upper Silesia and Transylvania. These plans provided for: "the re-annexation of Memel and Danzig;" the "political assimilation and ultimately territorial annexation of Austria and part of Czechoslovakia;" "territorial annexation in Poland and Russia (e.g., conquest of the Ukraine by Germany) ... and complete control of the Baltic states." [77] Vansittart also reported on the far-reaching plans of the German fascists to take over other countries' colonial possessions.

The course for British policy that Vansittart then pro-

ceeded to suggest to the Foreign Office was first and foremost that any rapprochement between Germany and the USSR should be impeded. Vansittart held that "an Anglo-French settlement with Germany would be more effective guarantee against the dangers of Russo-German co-operation." [78]

Vansittart's conclusion with regard to the course British policy should pursue could be summed up as follows: it was necessary "to keep Germany in play." He did, however, admit that the clouds of war were gathering in Europe and that therefore there was no longer any time to lose and that it was necessary to "strengthen the defence of England." [79]

This analysis of the situation was elaborated in a secret memorandum prepared for the Cabinet by Eden on February 11, 1936. Eden stressed the danger of Germany's growing military strength. As measures to counteract fascist aggression he recommended sacrifices, perhaps even major concessions, with regard to the colonies that had been taken away from Germany after the First World War. Eden held that the question regarding relations with Germany should be discussed with the British ministers concerned or a Cabinet Committee so as to make it easier for the British government to reach an agreement with Germany. [80]

On March 3, 1936 at a meeting of the Cabinet the Prime Minister presented a *White Paper* to members of the government that contained a programme of wide-ranging measures providing for the protection of Great Britain: its people, territories, cities, trade and communications. Measures were also outlined for the strengthening of the country's fleet, army and air force. [81]

It was pointed out in the *White Paper* that British land forces at that time were considerably smaller than those of Nazi Germany and only numbered 115,000. The British air force was also considerably weaker than Nazi Germany's Luftwaffe and only possessed 2,500 planes scattered round the world. By April 1937 Britain intended to increase the total of aircraft of all types in the Empire as a whole to 3,800. Prime Minister Baldwin in his announcement to the British Cabinet on February 27, 1936 spoke of the urgent need to strengthen the Empire's defences.

At the beginning of February 1937 the Committee of Imperial Defence drew up a highly secret document for those at its head. The report was to be kept "under lock and key"

and special steps were taken to ensure its secrecy.

The nucleus of the document was an analysis of the question as to whether Germany and Italy would be ready for war in 1937. In their analysis of the strength of Germany and Italy's land, naval and air forces the authors of the report concluded that "Germany is unlikely to plan to go to war in 1937, since at that time her military forces will be far from completely ready." [82] As for the military, political and economic position of Italy these had been severely undermined by the war against Ethiopia. "We conclude that Italy is unlikely to want war in 1937" [83] was the view of those compiling the report.

The authors of the report dwelt in considerable detail on the question of Russia being a possible ally of France and Great Britain. The USSR, according to British intelligence, not only possessed powerful land forces, but also a large air force numbering "2,950 first line aircraft, exclusive of those specially earmarked for operations East of Lake Baikal." [84]

The Committee of Imperial Defence came to the conclusion that "Germany fears the military threat [from the USSR—*F. V.*]." The position of the USSR, concluded the authors of the report, constituted the most important deterrent against Germany going to war. They also pointed out that "although the USSR has very great manpower and large stocks of equipment" and "is ready to fight on both Eastern and Western fronts at the same time" the Soviet Union was calling for peace rather than stressing its "immediate readiness for war." [85]

The report contained detailed figures comparing the strength of the military forces possessed by Britain, France, Belgium and the USSR—all possible allies—on the one hand, and those of their enemies—Germany and Italy, on the other.

It was also pointed out that "Great Britain, France and Belgium would be much stronger at sea than Germany and Italy and would be able to exercise considerable economic pressure." [86]

At that time Britain and France had 92 cruisers and 132 submarines while Germany and Italy between them had 31 cruisers and 120 submarines. With regard to land forces, however, Germany and Italy had the upper hand when numbers were compared. [87] Germany could field 34 divisions on the first day of hostilities while France, Britain and Belgium, even when they joined, could not field such large

land forces. The authors of the report were also of the opinion that Germany's state of military readiness was not yet at the level necessary for her to be able to unleash a war.

The conclusion was thus drawn that German HQ was unlikely to feel that the German army was ready to begin a successful offensive on land. With regard to Germany's and Italy's air forces, the report conceded that these were superior to those of Britain and France. German and Italian planes could drop 1,000 tons of bombs on Britain in a day, while the British and French air forces would only be able to drop 300 tons. [88]

While the fascist aggressors—Germany and Italy—were, at that stage, not yet ready to unleash a war against Britain, France and Belgium, nevertheless they still had sufficient forces to go to war against small countries. Their next victim was to be the Spanish Republic.

Complicity with the Fascist Aggressors in Spain

On the night of July 18, 1936 the radio station Centa transmitted the following coded message: "Clear skies all over Spain." This was the signal for the rebellion by clerical and monarchist reactionaries and a clique of military leaders rallied by Spanish, German and Italian fascists with the complicity of Britain, France and the USA.

A policy of encouragement for the fascist aggressors was pursued by the imperialists in Britain and other countries during the revolutionary war of the Spanish people against the forces of internal counter-revolution and international reaction.

In the middle of February 1936 during the elections to the Cortes (Spanish parliament) the parties that formed the Popular Front emerged victorious and set up a Republican government under Manuel Azaña which announced that its foreign policy would be one of peace.

The victory of the Popular Front met with violent opposition from reactionaries world-wide, who were ready to resort to anything, even fascism, to suppress democratic movements.

Not only Spanish reactionaries but also German and Italian fascists arranged a conspiracy against the forces of the Popular Front. Reactionaries from London, Paris and Washington also helped them to suppress the Spanish Republic,

since this step was part of the anti-Soviet course, aimed at a deal with the fascist aggressors in order that they might organize their war against the USSR.

After the parliamentary election in April/May 1936 a government was also formed in France that drew its strength from the Popular Front. This development alarmed ruling circles in Britain.

In May 1936, Thomas Jones, a personal friend of Prime Minister Baldwin, paid a secret visit to Berlin. During his meeting with Hitler, Jones talked about the danger of a victory for left forces in France and the need for closing the gap between the positions then held in Germany and Britain.

At a meeting in the British Prime Minister's country residence Chequers on May 22, Jones reported on the outcome of his visit to Germany, Baldwin expressed his approval for an alliance between Britain and Germany.

In one of the letters written by Jones subsequently it was noted that Britain would soon have to choose between Russia and Germany and that Hitler was not in a position to stand up to Russia on his own. According to Jones, Hitler was anxious to conclude an alliance with Britain so as to create a bastion to stem the spread of communism. The British Prime Minister held it to be essential that preference be given to the fascists. He was ready to travel to Berlin. Objections from some members of the British Cabinet obliged Baldwin to put off his visit to Hitler. Later during the Munich crisis Baldwin's successor, Neville Chamberlain, was not deterred from travelling to Germany.

The British imperialists set up a direct link with the fascist organization of the Falangists. When the fascist rising flared up the British fleet helped Franco transfer troops from Morocco to the European mainland.

The main aim of the politicians in London, Washington and Paris was to defeat the democratic forces in republican Spain, France and other countries of Europe, to support the fascists in their fight against socialism.

The British and the French governments, with the active support of the USA decided to opt for intervention by means of a blockade as the most effective way to bring the Spanish Republic to its knees. While outwardly pursuing a non-intervention line, they were promoting the active intervention in Spanish affairs perpetrated by the fascist states—Germany and Italy.

In order to implement this policy a Non-Intervention Committee was set up in response to a British initiative: it numbered 27 members led by Lord Plymouth from Britain.

From the outset, however, the prevailing trend in this Committee was one calling for the breaking off of the existing agreement on non-intervention.

Since August 1936 fascist Germany and Italy began openly to intervene in Spanish affairs. They sent the rebels large quantities of weapons, ammunition and later troops. In early November 1936 Hitler's Condor air-corps was sent to Spain: at that time it had a total of over 100 combat planes and a staff of 4,500. During the three years that the war in Spain lasted a total of 250,000 Italian and almost 50,000 German soldiers and officers were sent to Franco's aid. [89]

British and French politicians in their turn, while hiding behind a thin mask of a "policy of non-intervention" afforded Franco both direct and indirect help. Britain sold the rebels planes, sending these via Portugal. The British Navy virtually blockaded the whole of the Spanish coast (as suggested by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden). At the same time Britain, France and the United States refused to sell arms, ammunition and raw materials to the legitimate Republican government, thus placing it in a worse position than the rebels, which constituted a contravention of international law.

The abundant shipments of arms to the rebels from fascist Germany and Italy caused in the ruling circles of Britain serious concern. In a memorandum to the British Cabinet of January 8, 1937 Eden expressed his grave worries over the way and the direction Hitler's and Mussolini's expansionist ambitions might develop after Spain.

Eden reminded the members of the Cabinet that "in the language of the Nazi party any adventure is a minor adventure. They spoke thus of the Rhineland last year, they are speaking thus of Spain today, they will speak thus of Memel, Danzig or Czechoslovakia tomorrow". [90] Yet at the same time, reactionary circles in London, Paris and Washington continued to support the fascists in their fight against socialism and democracy to the detriment of their national interests.

Help from the USSR for the Revolutionary Masses in Spain

As a counterweight to the policy of complicity with the fascist aggressors, that was being pursued by Britain and other Western powers, the Soviet Union from the very beginning supported the Spanish people.

The position adopted by the USSR was expressed in Stalin's telegramme to the Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party's Central Committee José Diaz: "The working people of the Soviet Union are only carrying out their duty while helping the revolutionary masses in Spain to the best of their ability. They are clearly aware that the liberation of Spain from the yoke of fascist reaction is not a private affair of the Spaniards but a common cause for the whole of progressive mankind." [91]

The Spanish people was waging advance-guard action against the fascist aggressors in the name of peace and democracy. This fight was a battle against fascism shared by the whole of progressive mankind.

On more than one occasion the Soviet Union attempted to put an end to Italian and German intervention against the Spanish Republic. Yet the London-based Non-Intervention Committee took no action, despite warnings from the Soviet government to the effect that "if violations of the non-intervention agreement were not halted without delay it would consider itself free from any obligations stemming from that agreement." The London-based Non-Intervention Committee to use Litvinov's turn of phrase "chose to refrain from intervening in only one thing, namely, in intervention in developments in Spain." Not wishing to be held responsible for the situation that had taken shape, the Soviet Union announced on October 23 that from then on it would not regard itself as any more tied down by the non-intervention agreement than any of the other signatories to that agreement.

Strictly in keeping with international law and while still remaining faithful to the principles of proletaran solidarity, the Soviet state proffered all the help it could to the fighting people of Spain. Between October 1936 and January 1939 the Soviet Union supplied to Republican Spain: 648 planes, 347 tanks, 60 armored cars, 1,186 guns, 20,448 machine-guns, 497,813 rifles, and also a large quantity of shells, cartidges and powder. [92]

In 1938 the Soviet Union provided the Republican government with 85 million dollars' worth of credit. The working people of the Soviet Union collected 56 million roubles for a fund to help the Spanish Republic. In response to a request from the government of Republican Spain the Soviet Union sent over military experts and advisors who provided considerable assistance to that government in setting up a regular people's army and in the preparation and implementation of major military operations against the fascist interventionists and rebels.

The main military advisor to the Republican government was the former head of Soviet military intelligence P. Berzin (General Grishin). Other military advisors to the Republican government at the Spanish fronts were R. Malinovsky, K. Meretskov, P. Batov, N. Voronov, H. Mamsurov, A. Rodimtsev, V. Kolpakchi and many others who were later to become heroic military commanders in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. The Spanish people were also helped in their struggle for freedom and independence by volunteers from Britain, the United States, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, Poland—all in all a total of 54 countries. Over 42,000 volunteers fought in the International Brigades in Spain, including 2,000 from Britain and 3,000 from the USSR.[93] Approximately 200 Soviet volunteers gave their lives in the struggle for the freedom and independence of the Spanish people.

"Democracy and Peace or Fascism and War"

Ruling circles in Britain, France, and the United States went out of their way not merely to strangle the Spanish Republic but also to push the fascist states—Germany and Italy—into war against the Soviet Union.

The London *Times* wrote that the war in Spain was beginning to look both in Germany and beyond its borders like the first campaign in a German-led Crusade against Bolshevism.[94]

Leaking plans of the British and French reactionaries, Herbette, the French ambassador to Spain commented that "the contest is tragically taking on the aspect of a war in Spain between Germany and Italy on one side and Russia on the other."[95]

According to Harry Pollitt the struggle of Republican

Spain against the rebels and the Italian and German interventionists testified to the fact that the world was at a crossroads: "the signs are clearly pointed—democracy and peace, or fascism and war." [96]

The policy encouraging fascist aggression by Germany and Italy in Spain and the joint intervention by the fascist states fostered further rapprochement between them. Talks between Germany and Italy held in October 1936 culminated on the signing of a military cum political alliance between them on October 25—the notorious Berlin-Rome Axis. A month later a military alliance was formed between Germany and Japan, the official aim of which was their cooperation in the struggle against the Communist International. This alliance was to become known as the Anti-Comintern Pact.

A secret appendix to the pact stated among other things that in the case of war by one side against the USSR the other signatory was bound not to take any steps which might alleviate the position of the Soviet Republic. While aimed at the USSR, the Anti-Comintern Pact was also a screen for mobilization of the two countries' forces against Britain, France and other countries.

Those in charge of moulding British and French foreign policy underestimated, however, the danger from Germany, Japan and Italy to democratic countries. The assumption of power by Neville Chamberlain's government in May 1937 meant that British reaction had decided to conspire with the fascist aggressors, since the main goal which it set itself was to secure broad-based British-German agreement. So as to achieve this agreement with Hitler's Germany the British government sent a prominent member of the Cabinet to Berlin, namely, Viscount Halifax, Lord President of the Council.

On November 19, 1937 Halifax had talks with Hitler. Halifax gave Hitler to understand that if "broad agreement" were secured, meaning that Germany would guarantee the integrity of the British Empire, the British government would leave Hitler "a free hand" in Central and Eastern Europe. In practice this meant that Halifax was lending British approval to Hitler's plans to seize Austria, Czechoslovakia and Danzig by Nazi Germany.

On November 24, Halifax reported on the outcome of his talks with Hitler to the British Cabinet, which was approved by Chamberlain. Arthur Henderson, the new British am-

bassador to Berlin, spoke of the "possibility of an Anglo-German understanding." [97]

Not everyone in Britain viewed the course the government was pursuing with approval. Even such a violent opponent of Soviet power as Winston Churchill was beginning to point out the enormous danger that Germany represented not merely for Great Britain, not only for the signatories to the Locarno Treaty, but also for the whole of Europe and even the world. [98] Yet the ruling circles of Britain and France preferred to close their eyes to the danger stemming from the aggression of the fascist states.

At the Munich Conference held at the end of September 1938 Neville Chamberlain tried to settle the Spanish question with Hitler and Mussolini, basically to allow Spain to be torn apart by the fascists, to which end it was necessary to convene a conference with Britain, France, Germany and Italy. [99] The fascist states were not prepared to accept a compromise.

The next step taken by Britain and France to suppress Republican Spain was their recognition of the Franco regime which became official on February 27, 1939.

Despite intervention by Germany and Italy and the efforts of British and world-wide reaction the Spanish Republic had put up heroic resistance for three long years. Against this background the imperialists of Britain, France and the United States decided to strike the Republic in the back. A military coup was engineered in Madrid on the night of March 5, 1939. The Popular Front government was overthrown. With the help from British and French reactionaries and the United States the fascist rebels and the German and Italian interventionists took Madrid on March 28, 1939. This was the logical culmination of the Anglo-French policy of "appeasement" of the aggressors who were anxious to direct the full onslaught of fascism against the USSR.

* * *

The aggressive attack against Ethiopia by the Italian fascists, the remilitarization of the Rhine zone by Nazi Germany, the fascist revolt in Spain and the aggression perpetrated by German and Italian fascists against the Spanish people were major landmarks on the path to world war.

The fascist regime in Spain was established not merely

with the help of bayonets—open intervention on the part of German and Italian fascists—but also thanks to the efforts of the ruling circles in Britain, France and the USA. The suppression of Republican Spain was a setback in the struggle against fascism and reaction and therefore helped the fascist aggressors in their evil scheming to unleash World War II.

Chapter 10

The Betrayal at Munich

The "Psychological Attack" by Chamberlain and Daladier

At the end of that anxious September in 1938 people began feverishly digging trenches and shelters in the streets and squares of London and Birmingham, Paris and Le Havre: they began building barricades, mounted anti-aircraft guns, putting up barrage balloons, and trying out air-raid sirens. Sandbags were hastily piled up to protect the windows of Parliament and Buckingham Palace, the public buildings in Downing Street and Whitehall, the Palais Bourbon and the Quai d'Orsay, the windows of the fashionable shops in the Champs Elysées and Picadilly. Gas masks were distributed to the population at large. The authorities announced that the cities would be imminently evacuated and began taking hundreds of thousands of children out of London and Paris.

France called a partial mobilization and Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty gave orders for the mobilization of the Royal Navy and for the reserve flotillas and cruiser squadrons to be placed on full combat readiness.

What had given rise to this panic in Europe? Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, and the French President, Edouard Daladier were launching this wide-scale "psychological attack" to frighten the ordinary people of Britain and France with the fatal threat of world war. The general impression was that at any moment German bombers might appear over London and Paris, Coventry and Strasbourg.

This whipping up of war hysteria and this pre-war bluff were calculated by their instigators and the organizers of the Munich policy to disguise their conspiracy with the Nazis, their treachery and betrayal of the people of Czechoslovakia in order to "save peace", which culminated in the elimination of the state of Czechoslovakia as such.

A particularly serious blow at the security and sovereignty of Czechoslovakia was dealt by Nazi Germany's seizure of Austria carried out by Hitler with the knowledge and blessing of British and French politicians.

"The Austrian Requiem"

In the spring of 1938 an event took place which was to be the final episode in the Austrian tragedy. On March 9 the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg, after long agonizing, declared that a plebiscite would be held in Austria. The Austrian people had to confirm their determination to defend their independence, sovereignty and freedom in a plebiscite to be held on Sunday March 13.

The announcement of this plebiscite infuriated the fascist leaders who knew that it would be bound to end in disruption of the aggressive plans being hatched by Nazi Germany. It caused alarm in London as well. Chamberlain's Government feared a free expression of the Austrian people's wishes, since this would have upset Britain's plans for a "peaceful seizure" of Austria by Germany that had been designated as the price to be paid for directing fascist aggression against the USSR. For this reason, at the time when the plebiscite was being announced in Vienna, the British ambassador to Austria, Charles Palairet, received instructions from his Government to disrupt it. When Palairet demanded from Schuschnigg that the plebiscite should be postponed without hesitation, the latter refused to do this, realizing that such action would have undermined his prestige in the country once and for all and would have shown him to be a capitulator. Furthermore, Schuschnigg still had the illusion that there would be help forthcoming from the Western powers.

The British and French governments however not only failed to support the endeavours of the Austrian people to preserve their independence, and together with the USSR and certain other states to put up a collective front against fascist aggression, but went one stage further and gave their blessing to Germany's seizure of Austria.

On the night of March 10, after a number of conversations with Chamberlain and Viscount Halifax, Ribbentrop (who not long before had become Germany's Foreign Minister), in London at the time, reported back to Berlin in the following vein: "What now will England do if the Au-

strian question cannot be settled peacefully? Basically, I am convinced that England of her own accord will do nothing..." [1]

Later German leaders, including Ribbentrop, admitted that Germany would have had to stand back "if a larger international conflict" had arisen over Austria. [2] Germany at that time, from both the military and economic points of view, was not yet ready to start a European war. Chamberlain and Daladier however did not stand in the way of Hitler's dastardly plans.

At midday on March 11, Hitler, after receiving Ribbentrop's report, lost no time over giving Germany's armed forces the order to occupy Austria. Operation Otto, so carefully prepared, was now underway. Hitler presented Austria with an ultimatum, demanding that Schuschnigg's Government resign and that the plebiscite be dropped. If Austria refused to accept this ultimatum by 7 : 30 p. m. on the evening of March 11, 200,000 German soldiers would cross the Austrian border. Any resistance from Austrian troops, Hitler decreed, should be ruthlessly smashed by force of arms.

Fifteen minutes before the time had run out for acceptance of the ultimatum Schuschnigg broadcast a speech in which he announced his resignation. Betrayed by British and French politicians Schuschnigg preferred to capitulate rather than to resist Nazi Germany. By April 12 Austria had been occupied by the Nazis.

While the jackboots of the Nazi aggressors were ringing out over the roadways of the beautiful capital Vienna, Neville Chamberlain was giving a farewell luncheon for Ribbentrop in his London residence at No. 10 Downing Street, before the latter departed from the British capital. In the middle of this luncheon the permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Cadogan was handed a packet by a messenger from his Ministry. Cadogan then rose to his feet, walked over to Chamberlain and handed him the note he had just received without saying anything. Its recipient was informed of Hitler's invasion of Austria and of the rapid advance being made by German motorized units in the direction of Vienna. After reading the note all Chamberlain did was to remark to Ribbentrop "once we had all got past this unpleasant affair and a reasonable solution had been found, it was to be hoped that we could begin working in earnest toward a German-British undestand-

ing."[3] The luncheon then proceeded as if nothing had happened.

On March 13, fascist government headed by the German agent, Arthur von Seyss-Inquatr made public a "law" to the effect that Austria was a German state. That same day Hitler announced the liquidation of the Austrian Republic and the annexation of its territory by the German Reich.

Neither the United States, nor France, and still less Britain failed to lodge a firm protest in response to the treacherous violation by Germany of the treaties of Versailles and St. Germain. Far from opposing this act of open aggression, they accepted it. Viscount Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, was quick to recognize Germany's seizure of Austria. He saw the British Government as obliged to recognize that seizure, since the Austrian state had ceased to exist.[4] The governments of Britain, France and the United States approved the seizure of Austria which was the logical result of their policy of betraying the Austrian people.

Only the Soviet Union raised a protest against Hitler's aggression and in defense of Austria and the preservation of sovereign states' independence, demanding that the German fascists be held in check immediately. At a press conference held in the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs the world was informed by Litvinov of the stand taken by the Soviet Union, which was calling the attention of the Western powers to their responsibility for the future of the world and suggesting that an international conference be convened with Soviet participation. The Soviet Government issued a prophetic warning: "Tomorrow may be too late, but today there is still time for this."[5] The governments of the Western powers paid no heed to this warning. In betraying Austria and rejecting the proposal by the Soviet Government that measures be taken to organize a collective security system, the ruling circles in Britain, France and the United States took yet another step in the direction of war.

The seizure of Austria by Nazi Germany radically altered the political and strategic situation in Europe. The Nazis regarded Austria as a bridgehead for continuing their expansion, as the key to Central Europe, as the base for subsequent offensives against neighbouring countries and above all Czechoslovakia. A contemporary British journal noted that "Czechoslovakia was lost at the moment when Austria was seized."[6]

As is demonstrated beyond doubt by documents and materials from the Nuremberg Trial, from British Cabinet papers and Foreign Office, etc., the Munich deal and the seizure of Czechoslovakia which followed, the widening scope of fascist aggression in Europe were made possible only because of the treacherous and provocative policy pursued by the Western powers, who were still making every effort to set Germany against the USSR. This was Chamberlain's idée fixe and that of those who shared his views in France and the United States. From the summer of 1937 onwards Nazi Germany had been making hectic preparations for an attack against Czechoslovakia. In June 1937 Hitler's Minister of War Fieldmarshal Blomberg gave instructions for a lightning strike against Czechoslovakia to be prepared. This was the first draft for Operation Grün.

On November 5, 1937, at a secret meeting of the fascist leaders in the Reich's Chancellery in Berlin—Hermann Göring, Neurath, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Grossadmiral Raeder and Generals Blomberg and Fritzsche—Hitler, who had by this time made himself Commander-in-Chief of Nazi Germany's armed forces, outlined detailed plans for unleashing war in Europe and in particular plans for the seizure of Czechoslovakia.

The aggressors found Czechoslovakia's advantageous strategic position most attractive: the Nazis were convinced that the seizure of this country would eliminate any danger on Germany's flank if they were to attack the West. The Nazis would need to smash strong armed forces in that country, since Czechoslovakia was the only state among all the small nations in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe which had a developed industry, including a developed weapons industry (the Skoda munitions works).

Another reason why the choice for the next victim fell on Czechoslovakia was that the Nazi leaders were quite sure that there would be no opposition from Britain, France and the United States. Hitler considered it to be highly likely that Britain and perhaps France, too, had tacitly sold out where Czechoslovakia was concerned. The Nazi politicians were not mistaken in this assumption, because they knew only too well what to expect from the then British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. He was one of the most ominous figures in Britain's political annals. The danger

of his activity in British politics was aggravated by the extremely reactionary nature of his views and the limited nature of his political horizons.

After leaving trade and industry for which his father Joseph Chamberlain, a prominent imperialist and colonialist, had brought him up, Neville Chamberlain turned to politics. First of all his activities were confined to his home town of Birmingham where he was elected Mayor. His scope for action in the provinces was clearly not enough to satisfy Chamberlain's ambitious hopes and so he decided to try his luck at national level.

Chamberlain became a Member of Parliament and assumed the post of Secretary of State for Health in Baldwin's Conservative Government, and later that of Chancellor of the Exchequer in Ramsay MacDonald's coalition Cabinet. Later he accepted the post of Chairman of the Conservative Party from Baldwin. Being, as he was, a shareholder in the Imperial Chemical Industries, he took a special interest in the production of rifles, machine guns and cannon. After the resignation of Baldwin's Government at the end of May 1937 he at last achieved his long-cherished dream of becoming Prime Minister.

Chamberlain was one of the most relentless enemies of the Soviet Union. In the complex political situation of those times, having Chamberlain as Prime Minister was not merely a disaster for Britain but constituted a severe threat to the cause of peace in Europe and the world as a whole.

Chamberlain maintained close links with the pro-fascist Cliveden group. This was a highly reactionary group of British politicians and businessmen which used to meet in Cliveden, the estate of the rich and eccentric American, Lady Nancy Astor, in the county of Buckinghamshire. Habitués of the Cliveden group, apart from Neville Chamberlain, were Halifax who had taken over from Eden as Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the British ambassador to Berlin, Sir Neville Henderson, Lord Londonderry, Lord Swinton, Sir Samuel Hoare, James Garvin, editor of *The Observer,* and many other prominent and pro-German politicians and representatives of British business.

Another figure who maintained close links with the Cliveden group was Chamberlain's close advisor and "alter ego" Sir Horace Wilson, whose outlook in matters of foreign policy left much to be desired. Nevertheless this did not

prevent Wilson from playing a prominent part in British politics. Many of Chamberlain's "ideas" had originally been those of Sir Horace Wilson. Cliveden was also visited by the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Lord Vansittart and the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Alexander Cadogan. Cliveden provided a political meeting place for the most powerful group of the British monopolies' loyal servants and the main citadel for the enemies of the Soviet Union and supporters of Anglo-German alliance who backed up Chamberlain's Government.

Describing this pro-German, anti-Soviet grouping of British imperialists Harry Pollitt was to write in 1938: "But from the very moment Hitler came to power, and destroyed the labour movement in Germany, the National Government has been the main power which has helped Hitler by every political and financial means. It has let him violate every provision of the Versailles Treaty; it connived at the march into the Rhineland, the seizure of Austria, the breaking up of Czechoslovakia and the armed invasion of Spain." [7]

Indeed even Ribbentrop, while ambassador of Nazi Germany, had been invited to the Cliveden gatherings. After one such visit the editor of *The Times* began advocating that Germany be given back its colonies. Via Lady Astor's salon Ribbentrop was able to exert influence on Chamberlain.

Following in his Premier's footsteps was Chamberlain's Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax—an aristocrat by birth who had a long path of administrative and political appointments behind him: he had worked his way up from an ordinary civil servant to the post of Viceroy of India and Foreign Secretary. Halifax was a willing servant of Chamberlain's and a pillar of the Cliveden group.

The German fascists were also closely acquainted with their French partners, who, like the above-mentioned British politicians, were aiming above all at reaching agreement with the Nazis. In one of his reports back to Berlin, Count Welczek, the Nazi ambassador to Paris wrote: "...notwithstanding all the slaps in the face the French have received in the past years they are offering their hand to us; the slapped is extending his hand to the slapper." [8]

The Germans had particularly close knowledge of the French President Edouard Daladier who had remarked to one German diplomat in Paris that he had been working for twenty years to achieve agreement with Germany. [9]

The Nazis were also counting on the new pro-fascist Foreign Minister Georges Bonnet, who together with his wife was in the pay of German Intelligence. Even Daladier and the then French Chief of Staff Gamelin kept military information secret from Bonnet, for they knew that it would then be passed on straight to the Nazis. [10] The former British Prime Minister Lloyd George regarded Bonnet as a traitor pure and simple who was maintaining criminal links with the German Government. Journalists at the time joked bitterly but with every justification: "Have you heard? Our Foreign Minister is paid by France as well!" Often the French Foreign Minister acted as if he had been his German counterpart. On many occasions Bonnet spoke about France's inability and unwillingness to resist German aggression. Such views of this Nazi agent were well known in Berlin.

All this meant that Hitler had intimate knowledge of the capitulationist, treacherous stand taken by the reactionary ruling circles in Britain and France in face of spreading fascist aggression.

Hitler's Green Plan

In May 1938 on Hitler's instructions the German High Command prepared the so-called Green Plan for a lightning attack against Czechoslovakia and its seizure. Despite the opinions held by certain of the Nazi generals Hitler was convinced that the Western powers would just sit back and be reluctant to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia.

The pretext for this lightning strike against Czechoslovakia was to be a monstrous incident that the Gestapo was intending to orchestrate. A new variation of the Sarajevo assassination was to be provided by the specially engineered murder of the German envoy to Prague. The exact timing for perpetrating the "incident" was to be determined by weather conditions which needed to be favourable so that German planes could come into action. Another pretext for the attack was to be the "documents", specially fabricated for the occasion, about oppression to which the Sudeten Germans were being subjected in the border regions of Czechoslovakia. On this Count Ribbentrop received precise instructions from Konrad Henlein, agent of the German secret service who had been installed in the post of leader of the fascist, so-called Sudeten-German, party.

All Henlein's subversive activity was carried out under the supervision and control of the German military secret service. Henlein set up large detachments and groups of storm troopers from the ranks of the Sudeten Germans who, once hostilities had begun, were to attack the Czechs' strong border fortifications from the rear. German military intelligence was also carrying out similar subversive activities within the Czechoslovakian army. German agents managed to get hold of the plans of all the fortifications between Prague and the German border.

On instructions from Berlin Henlein and his party, flaunting banners calling for the German population's territorial and administrative autonomy, were loudly demanding that the so-called Sudeten region be allowed to secede from Czechoslovakia.

In London and Paris it was common knowledge that Henlein and the party of the Sudeten Germans were merely Nazi agents. Nevertheless the British and French governments went out of their way not to stand in the way of their subversive activities. On several occasions Henlein was to visit Britain (1936, 1937, 1938) where he established close political contacts with Lord Lothian, Lady Astor and Robert Vansittart.

In the spring of 1938 Henlein and his followers fanned an acute political crisis in Czechoslovakia that threatened to spill over into military conflict. The German fascists intended to organize in Czechoslovakia a repeat version of the "explosion from within" on the Spanish model and then to come to the help of Henlein and his followers. First steps towards mobilization were taken in Germany and everything seemed to augur success for the next act of Nazi aggression. News came from London and Paris, that neither Britain nor France (the latter still bound to Czechoslovakia by a treaty for mutual assistance) would come to the small country's aid. One of the German politicians at that time used the image of the bulldog, who would bark but not bite, to describe Chamberlain's policy with regard to Czechoslovakia. Indeed Chamberlain was to muzzle the British bulldog most effectively on this occasion. [11]

The policy pursued by the government in Paris was of a similar kind. During the talks held at the end of April 1938 between Chamberlain and Halifax representing Britain, and Daladier and Bonnet on the French side, a programme was drawn up for further capitulation by Britain

and France in the face of the fascist aggressors. Not only did Chamberlain accept that Britain and France were incapable of standing up to Nazi aggression, in particular the seizure of Czechoslovakia, but he virtually promised Hitler that he would do everything possible to ensure that his venture went ahead smoothly, only with one condition that he should not use armed force.

Chamberlain made this clear quite openly and cynically, announcing to American journalists at a press conference on May 10, 1938 that neither Britain nor France would fight to protect Czechoslovakia if Germany were to attack her, adding that the state of Czechoslovakia could no longer survive in its present form. [12]

Chamberlain's announcement that appeared in the US and Canadian press gave rise to violent protest in Britain, Czechoslovakia and other countries. He hurried to deny the statement, telling clumsy lies to wriggle his way out of the situation. This did not save the situation, however: the haste with which Chamberlain and Daladier were ready to betray the interests of the Czech people stemmed from the fear that the scheme for the Nazis to seize Czechoslovakia without using force might collapse. What was the core of this plan?

The invasion of Czechoslovakia by German troops might well meet with resistance by the Czechoslovak people. In its turn the French Government, under popular pressure, might find itself obliged to comply with its treaty obligations. If France were to enter a war this would upset all the anti-Soviet plans devised by Chamberlain's and Daladier's governments, for in that case the USSR would probably come to Czechoslovakia's aid. The resulting balance of military power might lead to a routing of the Nazi aggressors. This was something neither Chamberlain nor Daladier could contemplate, since such a turn of events would mean the collapse of their anti-Soviet plans.

This was why the politicians of Britain and France began indulging in gross pressure on and blackmail against the Czechoslovak Government, wresting concessions from the Czechs which in the final analysis would have made the Czechoslovak state collapse from within, would have paralyzed its capacity to resist the Nazis, thus making the country an easy prey for the aggressors.

After arriving in London in mid-May 1938 Henlein was given new assurances from Chamberlain and Halifax to the

effect that Britain and France, following in her footsteps, would not stand in the way of the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia.

Hitler lost no time taking advantage of this obliging response on the part of the British politicians. On his orders German armies began to concentrate at the border of Czechoslovakia. By May 19 200,000 crack troops had been assembled there. At the same time Henlein and his followers had begun, in response to instructions from Berlin, to instigate provocation in the Sudetenland. An extremely tense situation took shape, the so-called May Crisis. On May 21 Hitler launched the invasion of Czechoslovakia by German troops.

In face of grim dangers now hanging over the country the broad masses of the people, headed by the Communist Party, managed to persuade the Benes-Hodza Government to pass some urgent and effective measures to resist the fascists. Under pressure from the people the Czechoslovak Government carried out a partial mobilization of the army and by the evening of May 20 had transferred troops to the border. On many of the cannon near the border fortifications there sparkled fresh slogans like those seen in Madrid: "No pasaran." Some of the tanks moving towards the borders were decorated with hammers and sickles as a symbol of friendship with the Soviet Union.

The USSR's willingness to come to the help of the Czechoslovakian people was not doubted by anyone. In April 1938 the question of preserving the peace in Europe and preventing the seizure of Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany was discussed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) and a resolution was passed in which it was stated: "The USSR, if asked, is ready, together with France and Czechoslovakia, to take all possible measures to ensure the security of Czechoslovakia." [13] Litvinov, then People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, spoke of the USSR's loyal observance of its duty as an ally and this was reported back to the government in Prague by the Czechoslovak ambassador to the USSR. [14] An official declaration of the USSR's readiness to help the Czechs was made by the head of a Soviet military delegation then visiting Czechoslovakia in talks with General Krejci, Chief of Staff of the Czechoslovak army. [15] The Soviet Government officially informed President Benes that it had decided together with France and Czechoslovakia to

undertake all possible steps to ensure the safety of Czechoslovakia. [16]

The Soviet Government was ready to come and help Czechoslovakia without even waiting for France, since this case had been provided for in the Soviet-Czechoslovak treaty of mutual assistance. The only condition attached to the offer of help from the USSR was that Czechoslovakia should defend herself against the aggressor and directly approach the Soviet Union for help. [17] Hitler's planned attack against Czechoslovakia did not take place this time.

After the May Crisis the efforts of the British and French diplomats and intelligence were aimed at breaking the will of the Czechoslovak people to resist, at undermining the Soviet-Czechoslovak treaty of mutual assistance and moulding public opinion in the West so that it might be possible to organize an anti-Soviet conspiracy paying off Hitler with the prize of Czechoslovakia.

On July 17 in London, Hitler's secret agent Fritz Wiedemann arrived on the scene. He was also one of Hitler's aides de camp and conducted secret talks with Halifax and Cadogan. Halifax asked him to inform Hitler that "it would be the finest moment of his life if the Führer were to drive along the Mall side by side with the King during a visit of state to London". [18] Two days after Wiedemann's arrival King George VI arrived in Paris, accompanied by Halifax and the Secretary of State for Defence, Hore-Belisha. These two ministers, together with Daladier and Bonnet, approved plans for the final sell-out of Czechoslovakia to Hitler, which later were to form the basis of the Munich agreements.

The talks between the British Government and Hitler on the question of the Anglo-German conspiracy, aimed first and foremost against Czechoslovakia and the USSR, continued through August and September. So as to persuade the Prague Government to satisfy the claims of Nazi Germany and thus to speed up the conclusion of a broad-based Anglo-German agreement, the Runciman Mission was sent to Czechoslovakia.

It would have been difficult to choose a less suitable candidate for such a mission, if Britain and France, informed in the meantime about the visit, had wanted successfully to settle the question as to the defence of Czechoslovakia. He was a deaf, very old man who had never been concerned with international affairs.

At one time in the past while holding the post of the Sec-

retary of State for Trade, he had impeded the conclusion of an Anglo-Soviet trade agreement. Runciman made no secret of his pro-Nazi sympathies and he was proud of his wide personal contacts in financial circles in Germany and Czechoslovakia.

In Prague Runciman was surrounded by men from German Intelligence. In his room in a fashionable hotel microphones were set up to bug his conversations but this proved unnecessary, because the Nazis had first-hand information about Chamberlain's willingness to sacrifice Czechoslovakia. Runciman himself made no secret of this while talking to Czech industrialists.

Runciman's mission was to justify before public opinion Hitler's demands made to Czechoslovakia, to the effect that the Sudeten areas be seceded, and to undermine the system of the mutual assistance treaties between Czechoslovakia and the USSR, on the one hand, and between France and the USSR, on the other. After studying this question for six weeks Runciman submitted a memorandum advocating that the Sudetenland become part of Germany. He "concluded that Czechoslovakia could not continue to exist as she was and something would have to be done 'even if it amounted to no more than cutting off certain fingers.'" [19]

Runciman's provocative behaviour encouraged Henlein's supporters to indulge in new ventures. On the night of September 12 they organized a revolt in accordance with instructions from Berlin. This was an attempt to unleash a civil war in Czechoslovakia and to make it possible for Nazi troops to cross over into the Republic of Czechoslovakia. But the revolt was quickly put down by Czechoslovak police, and the Sudeten-German party was disbanded. Henlein fled to Germany where he began preparing troops to invade Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile Hitler was strengthening the concentration of German forces on the border of Czechoslovakia, threatening to use military force if the Czechs did not hand over the Sudetenland. Two thirds of the German army had been placed on war alert and the navy and air force had been put at combat readiness. On September 9 and 10 Hitler was discussing plans for a lightning strike at Czechoslovakia. [20]

Germany was not in fact ready for war. Hitler admitted in a secret directive that he would only embark upon military action against Czechoslovakia if he was sure that neither Britain nor France would come out against Germany.

The USSR "Would Keep Its Word"

The Soviet Union again came out strongly in favour of defending the Czechoslovak people, demanding that the fascist aggressors be held in check and meet with resistance. When the German Ambassador in Moscow, von der Schulenburg, paid a visit to Litvinov on Ribbentrop's instructions in order to clarify the Soviet Union's position should Germany invade Czechoslovakia, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, without any diplomatic preamble, declared straight out that if Germany were to unleash a war this would be regarded as unprovoked aggression. The Soviet Union promised its help to Czechoslovakia and stated clearly that it would keep its word. Litvinov stated that the USSR would "carry out its obligations to the letter." [21]

The British, French and Czechoslovak representatives in Moscow were all notified with regard to this discussion between the ambassador and Litvinov.

On several occasions the Soviet Government conveyed to the Czechoslovakian, British and French governments that the Soviet Union was determined to carry out its obligations in accordance with the Soviet-Czechoslovak Pact "using all available means to that end." This was reiterated by Litvinov again on September 2, 1938 during talks with the French Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow, Jean Payart. As a concrete step towards helping Czechoslovakia Litvinov, as instructed by the Soviet Government, suggested that a conference of Soviet, French, and Czechoslovak armies be convened. [22] The Soviet Union also called for a three-power conference—USSR, Britain and France—to avert war. [23] The Soviet Government was prepared to come to Czechoslovakia's aid, not merely in the diplomatic sphere but also with all types of military support.

The Soviet proposal submitted to France on September 2 was conveyed to Churchill by Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in London. Churchill, in his turn, immediately passed on the proposal to Lord Halifax. [24] The latter's reply to Churchill was to the effect that at that stage steps of that nature would not be useful. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax were looking not so much towards an alliance with the USSR as one with the fascist aggressors.

For a highly exclusive group from among the British Cabinet members a top secret Zet Plan had been elaborated by Horace Wilson, Chamberlain's closest advisor. Initially

only Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer Simon, Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax and Neville Henderson knew about it. This was a plan for the betrayal of Czechoslovakia and channelling fascist aggression against the USSR. The plan was discussed at a meeting of specially selected Cabinet members on August 30, 1938. [25]

The main gist of the declarations made by Chamberlain and Lord Halifax on this occasion was to the effect that there was no point in risking war with Germany if it were possible instead to sacrifice Czechoslovakia by way of "tribute" to Hitler in return for his attacking the USSR. Chamberlain pointed out that it was not expedient for Britain to take any steps to defend Czechoslovakia. He stressed later that the Cabinet was unanimous in its opinion that Herr Hitler should not be threatened with a declaration of war if he were to enter Czechoslovakia. [26]

The view taken on this matter by Henderson, the British ambassador in Berlin who spoke at the meeting, had been formulated in his memorandum sent to the Foreign Office still in August 1938, in which he had recommended that Nazi Germany should not be held back in what he referred to as her expansion and evolution in the East. Henderson noted that Germany ought not to be impeded in its preparations for war against the Slavs, provided that Hitler did not threaten the British Empire, while he did not deem Czechoslovakia important enough to be fought over.

The Meeting at Berchtesgaden

On September 7 a sinister article appeared in *The Times*. A spokesman for the Cliveden group came out openly and cynically with a demand for the handover of the Sudeten region to Germany by Czechoslovakia. The indignation thus aroused among democratic circles in Britain was so strong, that the Foreign Office quickly denied that it had anything to do with this article. In practice however the article in *The Times* reflected the official standpoint of the British Government, the mood and thoughts of the British ruling class.

After making the main task of British foreign policy that of securing an Anglo-German agreement, Chamberlain endeavoured to carry out this plan by means of personal negotiation with Hitler. Only one thing worried him as yet:

that Hitler might seize Czechoslovakia before Britain and France abandoned her to the fascists by peaceful means, after reaching a preliminary agreement on the direction in which further aggression by the Nazis would be channelled. At a meeting of the Cabinet on September 14 Chamberlain expressed the view that during the forthcoming talks with Hitler it was essential to hold out to him the prospect of an improvement in relations between Germany and Britain.[27] At that same meeting Chamberlain secured Cabinet approval for the Zet Plan and his own trip to meet Hitler at any place which might be deemed suitable. Chamberlain was working on an idea for holding a conference for high-level representatives from Britain, France, Germany and Italy (that was to come to fruition in Munich). This decision was immediately relayed to Berlin and Paris and also to Washington: it was duly approved by the governments of France and the United States. All that Chamberlain and Horace Wilson were worried about was avoiding humiliating failure in their endeavours: as they anxiously asked themselves whether Hitler would receive the mysterious Mister X, i.e., the British Premier or plead "ill health".

For Hitler Chamberlain's proposal had been an unexpected one. Yet he graciously agreed to the meeting. After receiving Hitler's consent to such a meeting the British Prime Minister who was nearly seventy and had never travelled by air before set off for Munich in a plane of the Lockheed Electra company from Croydon aerodrome early on the morning of September 15. He was accompanied by Horace Wilson and an advisor from the British embassy, Sir William Strang. At 12 : 30 the plane landed in the Munich aerodrome, Wiesenfeld. Chamberlain was met by Ribbentrop, who then accompanied him in an armoured carriage of a train that hustled him off to Berchtesgaden. This small spa town in the foothills of the Alps had at that time become the unofficial centre of German political life on a par with Downing Street in London, the Quai d'Orsay in Paris or the White House in Washington.

The meeting with the Nazi dictator took place on September 15 in the latter's summer residence in Berchtesgaden. The talks lasted several hours: the main question of interest to Chamberlain during these negotiations with Hitler was not the fate of Czechoslovakia (that had already been decided) but the securing of an Anglo-German agree-

ment aimed against the USSR. Later at a meeting of the British Cabinet Chamberlain recalled that the idea of giving Germany a free hand in Eastern Europe had first been mooted during his talks with Hitler in Berchtesgaden. [28]

Hitler's fears that war could result from the Czechoslovakian issue were allayed from the very outset of the meeting. To Hitler, barely able to conceal his delight, Chamberlain announced: "Since I have been Prime Minister I have been anxious to improve Anglo-German relations." [29]

Chamberlain made it perfectly clear to Hitler that if Germany were to attack the USSR "Czechoslovakia would be released from her obligations to Russia in the case of an attack on that country." [30] As for the transfer of Czechoslovakia's Sudeten region to Germany all Chamberlain asked was that the matter should not proceed with undue haste and then with no risk of conflict of any kind the Sudeten region would be in Germany's hands. [31]

Hitler used the language of ultimatums and threats in his talks with the British Prime Minister. He demanded that Chamberlain agree to the wresting of the Sudeten region from Czechoslovakia and its transfer to Germany. Threatening to start a world war if his wishes were not complied with Hitler then proceeded to declare that Czechoslovakia would after a short time cease to exist as such. Hitler demanded the "abolition of the treaty between Russia and Czechoslovakia". [32] Timid attempts by Chamberlain to make the question of the surrender of Czechoslovakia to Hitler dependent upon the signing of an Anglo-German agreement ended in failure. Hitler assumed (and with good reason) that Czechoslovakia would be surrendered to him without any conditions whatsoever. He did not prove mistaken.

Later in talks with the Hungarian Foreign Minister Count Csáky, when describing the treacherous policy pursued by Britain and France with regard to Czechoslovakia Hitler openly admitted that he had achieved the impossible. Six months earlier he would never have believed that Czechoslovakia would be handed to him on a plate by her alleged friends. He had not thought that Britain and France would go to war over the issue but he had been convinced that Czechoslovakia would have had to be suppressed by force. The eventual outcome of the question he saw as an unprecedented piece of luck unlikely to repeat itself in history. [33]

After his return from Berchtesgaden on the evening of

September 16 Chamberlain called a meeting of the Big Four attended by Vansittart, Cadogan, Wilson and Lord Runciman, hurriedly called to London for the occasion. Chamberlain reported to the Four that he had agreed to let Hitler have the Sudeten region and then went on to enquire as to what they might ask for in return for this. [34]

Although it was at the weekend Chamberlain convened a Cabinet meeting on September 17 which lasted the whole day. Runciman and the other members of the Cliveden group not only supported Chamberlain but went further still. Sir Thomas Inskip, the minister in charge of coordinating defence, came out against defending Czechoslovakia in the form in which she then existed. What concerned Inskip above all was that a war against Hitler might lead to the collapse of fascism which would, as he put it, only be to the liking of Moscow and the Bolsheviks. [35]

Britain's politicians were concerned about what might lie in store for the fascists. Meanwhile certain ministers—such as First Lord of the Admiralty Duff Cooper, and Trade Secretary Oliver Stanley, expressed fears at the dangerous course pursued by Chamberlain. Duff Cooper pointed out that peace in Europe was a vain hope so long as the Nazi regime in Germany continued to exist. Stanley stated more resolutely, that if it came to a choice between capitulation and the war he would opt for the latter. [36]

At the end of the meeting Chamberlain assured members of the Cabinet that they were not faced by a choice between capitulation and war, but merely asked to reflect upon the principle of self-determination. [37] This was the euphemism the Prime Minister used to camouflage the impending dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain was making ready to "keep the peace" by handing over Czechoslovakia to Germany. The Cabinet approved his course of action and this concession to Hitler was duly agreed upon with France.

On the next day, September 18, a secret meeting of British and French ministers took place in London to discuss Chamberlain's report on his talks with Hitler in Berchtesgaden. It was on this occasion that the final plans for the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia [38] were drawn up and the Anglo-French memorandum-ultimatum to Czechoslovakia was composed, before being finally delivered in Prague by the British and French envoys Sir Basil Newton and Victor de Lacroix. Britain and France demanded that the

regions inhabited by Sudeten Germans be immediately taken away from Czechoslovakia and handed straight over to Germany. It was also demanded that Czechoslovakia abrogate the assistance treaties with the USSR and France.[39] The annulment of these treaties put an end to the system of military alliances which had linked France and Czechoslovakia with the USSR and this step was a vital measure aimed at isolating Soviet Russia, which now found itself face to face with the fascist aggressor.

Last but not least, the British and French politicians were endeavouring to halt the development of friendly ties between the Soviet and Czechoslovak peoples. All these moves marked the beginning of the tragic demise of the state of Czechoslovakia.

The betrayal of Czechoslovakia by Chamberlain and Daladier gave rise to a wave of protest throughout the world. Under pressure from the popular masses on September 20, 1938 the Benes-Hodza government rejected the Anglo-French proposals that had been elaborated without Czechoslovakia's participation and worked against the cause of world peace. Their acceptance would have led to the crippling of the Czechoslovak state.[40] In addition the Czechoslovak Government asked the British and French governments to review their position.

In London and Paris however a very different line was being taken. At two o'clock in the morning of September 21 Benes was called from his bed when the British and French envoys in Prague came to hand him a "midnight memorandum." This virtual ultimatum constituted unprecedented, outrageous interference in the affairs of Czechoslovakia since the British and French were demanding the unconditional capitulation of the Czechoslovak Government, pointing out that if the Czechs were to reject the ultimatum, responsibility for unleashing war would rest with them. The diplomats threatened that if the Czechs were to join forces with the Russians the war might well turn into a crusade against the Bolsheviks.

The declaration by the envoys contained an unmistakable threat to the effect that Britain and France would support Germany in a war against the USSR and Czechoslovakia. Although the people and the army unhesitatingly rejected capitulation, on September 21 the Czechoslovak Government accepted the ultimatum at an emergency meeting.[41] This aroused the anger of the whole people. Hodza's gov-

ernment was overthrown. Benes appointed a new government led by General Syrovy which for all intents and purposes pursued the same policy as the former capitulators.

The Soviet Government reaffirmed its readiness to come to the help of Czechoslovakia. At a meeting of the Central Committee's Politburo, held on September 20, it was decided to instruct the Soviet envoy in Czechoslovakia to reaffirm the Soviet Union's readiness to afford Czechoslovakia immediate assistance.[42] On that very same day when the Czechoslovak Government had to reply to the Anglo-French ultimatum, namely on September 21, the USSR representative declared unequivocally at a plenary session of the League of Nations: "We intend to fulfil our obligations as laid down in the pact and together with France to help Czechoslovakia by those means available to us."[43]

The USSR People's Commissariat for Defence was ready to attend straightaway a meeting with representatives of the French and Czechoslovak military establishments to discuss measures made necessary by the emergent situation. The People's Commissar for Defence and Soviet HQ took preliminary steps by moving over towards the country's Western borders 30 infantry and 10 cavalry divisions and a tank corps. An additional 328,000 men were called up into the Red Army. The Soviet airforce and anti-aircraft regiments were ready for action.[44] The USSR People's Commissariat for Defence conveyed this information to the French HQ and also to the French military attaché in the USSR Colonel Palasse.[45]

Meanwhile the Soviet Ambassador in Czechoslovakia, Alexandrovsky, informed Benes by telephone that the USSR was ready to come to the help of Czechoslovakia. Alexandrovsky's call came at the very moment when the Czechoslovak Government was discussing the Anglo-French ultimatum. The Soviet Government, Alexandrovsky assured Benes, had given an affirmative answer to the latter's question as to whether the USSR, in accordance with the treaty, would afford Czechoslovakia immediate and effective help if France were to remain loyal and also afford assistance...[46]

The Soviet Union was the only one of the great powers actively to come out in support of the Czechoslovak people during those grim days. Later Benes was to acknowledge that Russia had remained faithful to them to the very end.

He recalled how the Soviet Government had solemnly promised to send Czechoslovakia military help, even if Britain and France did not do the same. At the time the USSR Ambassador reported back to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs: "Amazing scenes are taking place in Prague. Crowds of demonstrators with obvious sympathy from the police are coming along to the embassy and sending in delegations asking to speak to the ambassador. The crowds are singing the national anthem and are in tears. They keep singing the *Internationale* as well. From the speeches being made it is clear that their hopes are pinned above all on help from the USSR... Hitler and Chamberlain inspire an equal degree of hatred." [47] Large-scale protest demonstrations, led by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia took place in other towns as well. The Czechoslovak bourgeoisie, however, concerned first and foremost with its own class interests, was unwilling to accept help from the USSR and preferred shameful capitulation to the struggle, thus deliberately betraying the interests of its own people. It bears just as much responsibility for the unleashing of fascist aggression as the governments of Britain, France and the United States.

Once Again the "Man with the Umbrella"

After receiving Benes' agreement to the capitulation Chamberlain hurried off for a new meeting with Hitler, on this occasion in Bad-Godesberg on the Rhine. The meeting took place on September 22, 1938 at four o'clock in the afternoon. Chamberlain informed Hitler of the Anglo-French plan for withdrawing the Sudeten region from Czechoslovakia. The British Prime Minister was counting on Hitler's gratitude, however this was not to be forthcoming. In a humiliating tone for Chamberlain Hitler turned down the plan that had been drawn up on the basis of the demands he had formulated at Berchtesgaden. On this occasion he came forward with new demands that were in essence none other than an ultimatum. Without saying anything, Hitler drew Chamberlain's attention to the map of Czechoslovakia hanging on the wall on which the new borders of the country were already marked. Even Chamberlain pointed out timidly that these new borders gave Germany too much territory and called for a more moderate line. Then Hitler

made an angry scene and threatened to use force, sending in ninety or a hundred mobilized divisions if his demands were not accepted [48]. Chamberlain expressed surprise at why Hitler should wish to resort to force if he could obtain all he wanted by peaceful means with complete certainty, without risk or the loss of German lives. [49] Without beating about the bush Chamberlain traded Czechoslovak territories by suggesting various "peaceful" concessions.

In accordance with Hitler's Bad-Godesberg Memorandum Czechoslovakia was to lose territories with a total population of 816,000, with a total of 450 Czech towns and villages. In the territory where the plebiscite had been carried out there were living at the time 1,116,000 Czechs and only 144,000 Germans. Czechoslovakia was to lose all her fortifications and the majority of her heavy industry. Yet this did not worry the British Prime Minister in the slightest.

On his return from Bad-Godesberg on September 24 an umbrella-swinging Chamberlain fobbed off the journalists at the aerodrome with the phrase: "Now it's up to Czechoslovakia!" That same day Chamberlain hurriedly called a Cabinet meeting at which he complained of Hitler's impolite and discourteous ultimatum presented to him at Bad-Godesberg. He put it down however to the German tendency for using harsh words. Meanwhile Lord Halifax had conveyed Hitler's demands to the Czechoslovak envoy in London and Newton, the British envoy in Prague, made it clear to Benes that if Hitler's demands were turned down and the Czechoslovak forces were to mobilize, such steps would be followed by an immediate invasion of Czechoslovakia by German troops.

Hitler's outrageous demands and the policy of betrayal pursued by Chamberlain and Daladier gave rise to a new wave of protest in democratic circles worldwide, particularly in Britain and Czechoslovakia. A flood of rallies and demonstrations organized by the Communist Party swept across Britain.

Even within the ranks of the Conservative Party the policy pursued by Chamberlain, who had given away Czechoslovakia to Hitler and not achieved any tangible results in his efforts to secure an anti-Soviet deal, was giving rise to serious criticism from members of the Cabinet such as Duff Cooper, Oliver Stanley and Lord Winterton. He was being criticised by Eden and Amery, Elliot and Churchill who declared openly in the press that "the belief that se-

curity" might "be obtained by throwing a small state to the wolves" was "a fatal delusion." [50] Under pressure from the Czechoslovak people Syrovy's new government was obliged to carry out a partial mobilization and reject Hitler's outrageous demands. The Czechoslovak people were firmly resolved to defend their homeland by force of arms.

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia turned to the peoples of the world with an appeal, warning that the Third Reich was interested not in regulating national relations within the Republic or even of occupying the Sudetenland but of eliminating the whole of Czechoslovakia. [51]

The Czechoslovak people were firmly and unshakeably resolved "to defend the existing borders of the Republic by all possible means" [52] and thus to assert their existence as a state and nation. They were resolved to defend not only their own country but also "the cause of the whole of civilized mankind from the insanity of barbarians threatening the whole world." [53]

The resolve of the Czechoslovak people to defend their freedom and the sovereignty of their state was, however, contrary to the plans hatched by Chamberlain and Daladier.

In an effort to stem the opposition from the broad popular masses in Britain, France and Czechoslovakia to the policy of criminal conspiracy with the fascist aggressors and somehow to justify in the eyes of the peoples the betrayal of the Czechoslovak state the governments of Chamberlain and Daladier began a psychological attack—all-out blackmail by threat of war. They set out to convince the masses that any resistance to Hitler would mean an irreversible threat of wide-scale war. This however was far from true: Henderson, then British ambassador in Berlin, wrote at the time in one of his reports to London: "I believe that if we really showed our teeth Hitler would not dare to make war today." [54]

During the Nuremberg Trial Field Marshal Keitel, who had known full well what Germany's military potential had been at the time, admitted in the dock that if the Western powers had supported the Prague government Germany would not have dared to start a war.

Germany at the time actually had at its disposal only 35 infantry and 16 Panzer and motorized divisions and, moreover, a third of these was still at the stage of formation. [55] Czechoslovakia could have put into the field against them

45 divisions of men filled with a burning sense of patriotic duty, which had at their disposal 1,500 military aircraft, between 470 and 740 tanks and approximately 601,000 machine guns. Benes admitted that the Czechoslovak army at that time was one of the best in Europe.[56]

The French army at the time numbered 100 divisions and the British armed forces (including the Territorial Army) 455,000 men. The potential human resources of the British Empire were enormous. The superiority of the British and French navies over the German one was clear for all to see. The might of the Soviet Army, air force and navy meant that Czechoslovakia would have had a clear advantage in numbers even if Britain and France had not come to her assistance, treacherously reneging on their obligations.

The Plan for a "Palace Revolution" in Berlin

Colonel General Ludwig Beck, former German Chief of Staff, held that unleashing war against Czechoslovakia and then world war was a step tantamount to suicide for the Nazi Reich at that time. While supporting Hitler's aggressive plans overall, at that particular stage Beck saw the situation as hopeless for Germany. Resigning as he did as a mark of protest against such aggression Beck could not have imagined that Britain and France would abandon Czechoslovakia.

In order to avert the inevitable collapse of Nazi Germany in military conflict in August-September 1938, a conspiracy was organized against Hitler by generals and diplomats in which Beck's successor, General Halder, Beck himself, General Stülpnagel and Field Marshal Witzleben, commander of the Berlin garrison all took part. The conspirators also included Count Helldorff, the Berlin Chief of Police, and his deputy Schulenburg and Colonel Hoeppner, commander of a tank division stationed in Thuringia. Major General Hans Oster—the right-hand man of Admiral Canaris, Chief of Military Intelligence for the Nazis—took it upon himself to draw up the plan for the "palace revolution" in Berlin. In addition to Canaris and Oster, other prominent members of Military Intelligence such as Hans Berndt Gisevius were also acquainted with the plans for the conspiracy.[57] The conspirators persuaded General Halder, the new Chief of Staff, to implement the coup in the middle of September:

they were to arrest Hitler, Göring, Goebbels and Himmler, if Hitler gave the command to start a war against Czechoslovakia.

The conspirators were in close touch with Britain and American Intelligence through intelligence officers Hans Berndt Gisevius and Ewald von Kleist and Theodor Kordt, Counsellor at the German embassy in London.

Kleist arrived in London on August 18, 1938 representing the opposition generals and he had a meeting with Vansittart and Churchill. Kleist informed the British statesmen that Hitler had given orders for an invasion of Czechoslovakia after September 27. This declaration was brought to the attention of Chamberlain. [58]

The British Prime Minister, thereby rescuing Hitler, did not give his approval to the intentions of the conspirators: the fact was that he needed Hitler to implement his anti-Soviet designs. Chamberlain flew out to see Hitler at Berchtesgaden. No signal for the generals' putsch followed and it was decided to defer the action and wait to see how events would develop.

During the "war of blackmail" Chamberlain again declared Britain to be unwilling to come to the help of Czechoslovakia, going on to say that if Britain had to fight she would do so over more important issues than that of Czechoslovakia. Hitler, in his turn, organized a parade of German motorized troops through Berlin purely for the sake of "psychological" impact. To alarm foreign diplomats, the troops not only marched past the government buildings in Unter den Linden but also down the Wilhelmstrasse where the British embassy and other diplomatic missions were situated.

The "psychological" move was to prove successful. Henderson reported to London that Hitler was resolved to start a war. On the day of the Nazi parade Chamberlain made a speech over the radio that was striking for its cynicism: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing... I would not hesitate to pay even a third visit to Germany... Armed conflict between nations is a nightmare to me." [59]

Earlier still the newspaper magnate Lord Rothermere had proclaimed that all the Czechs together were not worth the bones of a single British soldier!

In an attempt to carry out his scheme Chamberlain and his sympathisers decided to have done with Czechoslovakia by calling a four-power conference to be attended by Britain, France, Germany and Italy (but without the USSR and virtually without the participation of Czechoslovakia). On the morning of September 28 Chamberlain sent this proposal to Hitler and Mussolini. Chamberlain selected what he deemed a suitable moment for this step. As was to emerge later from testimony by Field Marshal von Brauchitsch given at Nuremberg it was at that very time that the group of German generals headed by Beck, Witzleben and Halder was once more considering its plans for a "palace revolution" and the murder of Hitler. Those involved in the conspiracy reported this to Chamberlain via Henderson, the British ambassador in Berlin.

By deciding to meet Hitler, Chamberlain, once again, as at Berchtesgaden, prevented the conspiracy from taking place and saved the dictator. At the moment when Halder was ready to give the order for Hitler's arrest, news came from Britain of Chamberlain's forthcoming meeting with Hitler,[60] who invited him to come to Munich for a conference. Chamberlain immediately accepted the invitation. At midday on September 29, 1938 the conference opened in Munich attended by Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler and Mussolini. Czechoslovak representatives brought from the aerodrome to the Hotel Regina in police cars accompanied by men from the Gestapo were not allowed into the conference rooms. They waited for the decision on the fate of their country outside the doors. The Soviet Union had not been invited to the conference, although a just resolution of the international issues involved was of vital concern to it. It had proposed a conference to seek for ways for counteracting aggression and for saving peace.

The day that Chamberlain flew to Munich, Lord Halifax invited Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in London, to come to see him and tried unsuccessfully to convince him that the USSR had not been invited to Munich only because Hitler and Mussolini did not wish to hold negotiations with representatives of the Soviet Union present. Lord Halifax made it plain: "We all had to face facts and one of these facts was, as he very well knew, that the heads of the German Government and of the Italian Government

would not be willing in present circumstances to sit in conference with Soviet representatives." [61]

Chamberlain and Daladier wanted to adopt resolutions in Munich not *with* the Soviet Union but *against* it, using Czechoslovakia as small change in return for a conspiracy between Britain and France on the one side and the fascist aggressors on the other.

A great deal has been written about the Munich conference. In the history of "perfidious Albion" (Britain) and proud Marianne (France) there can surely be few such examples of obsequious grovelling before fascist dictators, as those provided by Chamberlain and Daladier.

As the British diplomat Kirkpatrick was to write, the British and French representatives at the conference "showed no sign of shame at being parties to the dismemberment of their ally." [62]

At 00 : 25 of September 30 the Munich agreement was signed. Chamberlain's signature on the agreement was reminiscent of a school-boy's scribble, then came Daladier's dainty loops to be followed by Hitler's ugly flourishes and finally Mussolini's signature. The north-western part of Czechoslovakia, Sudetenland, had been signed away to the Germans complete with all the industrial wealth of that region and the strong fortifications that had been set up there. [63] Beck's Poland and Hungary were also to be given tasty morsels from Czechoslovakia. The "international guarantees" of Czechoslovakia's new frontiers promised at Munich were never given by Britain or France.

An hour later at 1 : 30 in the morning after the conference had been completed, the Czechoslovakian delegates, cast more in the role of defendants than anything else, were led into the hall where Chamberlain and Daladier had remained behind with their advisors. The final act of the Munich drama was now played out, more striking than ever for its atmosphere of low trickery. The Czechoslovak representatives were informed in the most callous way of the decisions that had been taken without their involvement and it was announced to them that this was a verdict against which there was no appeal and to which no amendments could be made. Matters were made even worse by Chamberlain sitting there yawning all the time without the slightest compunction. Daladier while appearing embarrassed said nothing.

In answer to a question asked by the Czechoslovak re-

presentative Masaryk as to whether or not an answer was expected from Czechoslovakia the French representative Leger replied that the four statesmen had no more time available and that no answer was expected from Czechoslovakia. On September 30 the Czechoslovak Government accepted the Munich diktat.

In order to justify his betrayal of Czechoslovakia Chamberlain signed a non-aggression declaration with Hitler in Munich. This declaration was one of the links in the chain of the policy directed towards an Anglo-German deal against the USSR. Later France was to sign a similar declaration with Hitler thus virtually burying alive its mutual assistance treaty with the Soviet Union. As subsequent events were to show these declarations were nothing but pieces of paper.

Thus it was that in Munich the violence perpetrated against Czechoslovakia by the imperialist powers finally came to an end. Chamberlain and Daladier had dealt a new blow to the cause of collective security, although attempting right until the bitter end to act out their shameful role of "appeasers."

When the British Prime Minister returned to London after the fateful Munich Conference, that was such a bitter tragedy for the peace-loving peoples of Europe, he waved the declaration bearing Hitler's signature and called to the crowd that had gathered outside his official residence at No. 10 Downing Street proclaiming: "I believe it is the peace for our time!"

This peace however was not to last even for a year, even for Chamberlain's own generation! Oliver Stanley saw Chamberlain's "peace" as no better than a shaky truce. Chamberlain, on the other hand, as was to be relayed by the Polish ambassador in London, considered that he had defended the gate to Britain and in this way shifted Hitler's game to the East of Europe.

The United States Government hurried to announce its response to the Munich conference, authorizing their ambassador in London, Joseph Kennedy, to convey brief but most eloquent praise to Chamberlain: "Well done!"

Churchill was more realistic in his assessment of the Munich conference than either Chamberlain or Kennedy. As he saw it, Great Britain and France had to choose between war and dishonour: they had opted for dishonour but would soon have war.

The day Daladier returned to Paris from Munich was a cold one and it was raining. Nevertheless thousands of Parisians came out into the streets rejoicing in the fact that peace was still intact. In actual fact however it was that at Munich Chamberlain and Daladier had not only betrayed the Czechoslovak people but had also opened the flood-gates of World War II.

Czechoslovakia's death warrant was signed in Munich as a result of which the country lost a third of its territory, five million of its population, up to half its production capacity, its first-class fortifications, that were superior to the Maginot line, and its armed forces, since those contingents which remained were to be cut down.

In mid-March 1939 when President Hacha and Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky were summoned to Berlin for direct negotiations with Hitler, German troops swooped down on Czechoslovakia. Hitler threatened to liquidate any military formations which put up any resistance to the Germans. After occupying Bohemia and Moravia Hitler declared these to be a German protectorate, and he turned Slovakia into an appendage to provide a source of agrarian produce and raw materials, by setting up a puppet republic led by a fascist government under Joseph Tiso.

Germany captured the well equipped munition works of the Skoda company and 23 other enterprises producing military equipment. General Jan Syrovy handed over to Germany the first-class armaments of the Czechoslovak army. Czechoslovakia had ceased to exist as a free, independent and sovereign state and was to suffer under fascist oppression for the next six years.

The governments of Britain, the United States and France, despite the wave of protest and indignation sweeping the whole of Europe, hurried to acquiesce at this new treacherous and aggressive action by Hitler. Chamberlain took no action except to express his regret at what had happened and admit "the destruction of Czechoslovakia." [64]

Once again the Soviet Union was the only state to come out in support of the Czechoslovak people. It was pointed out in a declaration issued by the Central Committee of the Society for Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship that "precisely the Soviet Union will go down in history as the only hope of a guarantee for our freedom and independence." [65] The Soviet Government did not recognize the incorporation of Bohemia and Moravia into the German Reich, regarding

this action as a blatant violation of the country's sovereignty and of international law.

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia staunchly defended the interests of the people, calling upon the working population to struggle against the fascist aggressors to rally together and unite so as to protect their very existence as a nation. [66]

* * *

Over forty-five years have passed since the shameful Munich deal was struck by the imperialist nations, a deal that was to prove not merely a tragedy for the people of Czechoslovakia but which was to be a fateful step for the whole of Europe, for the whole world.

The Soviet Union has always been a staunch and true friend of Czechoslovakia. It held out a fraternal hand during the difficult days of the Munich treachery in 1938, when Britain and France abandoned Czechoslovakia to be torn apart by Nazi Germany.

The USSR made a decisive contribution to the liberation of Czechoslovakia from fascist enslavement. During the Second World War 140,000 Soviet troops laid down their lives for the sake of their Czechoslovak brothers' freedom and independence. In the joint struggle of the peoples of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia against German fascism slogans came into being which were imprinted upon the minds of the Czechs and Slovaks and played an important part in their lives: "Hand in hand with the Soviet Union forever!" "The fraternal friendship between the peoples of the USSR and Czechoslovakia," Gustav Husak, the General Secretary of the Central Committee, referred to in his speech at the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, is one "sealed with blood shed in battles against the common enemy and tempered in the everyday toil for the building of socialism and communism." [67]

Chapter 11

Secrets of the Moscow and London Talks Disclosed

Early one August morning in that sultry summer of 1939 a shabby packet boat named *City of Exeter,* carrying passengers and cargo, set out from London. Other vessels moved past the small steamer that was proceeding at a snail's pace—only thirteen knots—between the London docks and factories lining the Thames.

Soon the shores of Britain were hidden in a smoky haze and the steamer set sail for the Baltic, for Leningrad. On board this small steamer that was sailing to the Soviet Union were members of the British and French diplomatic missions who had been instructed to carry on the dangerous double game of the British and French politicians, above all that of Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier.

Chamberlain's Long-term Aim

In those fateful days of the spring and summer of 1939 when ominous war clouds were gathering on the horizon, ruling circles in Britain and France, with the support of the USA, were still pursuing the policy elaborated in Munich. This was that very same policy of rejecting collective security, channelling fascist aggression in the direction of the Soviet Union, while concealing the true intentions of the British and French ruling circles, so as to delude public opinion not merely with the hypocritical phrase-mongering on the subject of their willingness to cooperate with the Soviet Union, but also through a double game, through secret political manoeuvring.

Political manoeuvres of this sort were the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations which had been initiated by Britain and France in the spring and summer of 1939. A large part of

this game that British and French diplomats were playing during the last months of the political crisis leading up to the war is still concealed in the archives of the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay. Yet even those materials and documents from the above archives which have recently been made accessible to the general public, particularly those relating to meetings of the British Cabinet,[1] make it possible to lift the veil from many secrets.

After the spring of 1938 the main thrust of British foreign policy stood out even more clearly—namely the endeavour to conclude an agreement with Hitler. In a report sent by Chamberlain to the Italian Ambassador in London, Grandi, it was stated that the long-term aim of the Prime Minister was a lasting, and as binding as possible treaty with Hitler and Nazi Germany.

The old diplomat and spy, Herbert von Dirksen, reported this back to Berlin from London: he had served under Kaiser Wilhelm in his day, worked for the Weimar Republic and had now started working for Hitler. Von Dirksen was regarded as a specialist in Russian affairs and for five years he had been German ambassador in Moscow before replacing Ribbentrop as German ambassador in London. He informed his fascist masters that Britain was keen to "seek an adjustment with Germany"[2] by means of negotiation.

This was borne out by Henderson, the British ambassador in Berlin, who had demanded that the main objective of British policy should be the achievement of a wide-scale agreement with Germany and Italy.[3] The prominent Conservative, Lord Beaverbrook said to the Soviet ambassador, when he met him in London soon after Munich, that Chamberlain was ready to capitulate in face of the aggressors again and was not contemplating any kind of resistance to German expansion in South-East Europe. He for his part was hoping to push Hitler into a conflict with the USSR.[4]

In his turn Daladier, as was reported by the USSR ambassador in France, was firmly resolved to come to terms with Germany, and to this end he was ready to sacrifice the last scrap of collective security and mutual assistance treaties.[5]

The bargain with Nazi Germany was the first crucial part of the "plan" to cobble together an anti-Soviet bloc of the capitalist states. The culmination of this plan was to be the long-awaited unification of Europe without Russia and

against Russia. Moreover the core of this unification was to be provided by an Anglo-German and Franco-German alliances. The British and French politicians considered that in order to implement the main strategic thrust of this policy—namely agreement with Nazi Germany and the channelling of German aggression against the USSR—new tactical methods and devices needed to be found. The aim which Chamberlain and Daladier had set themselves—the signing of an anti-Soviet treaty with Hitler—would be effected with new, different methods: by means of threats to the effect that Germany might well be encircled. These meetings with the USSR were clearly designed to facilitate the conclusion of such an agreement.

Gabriel Péri, a columnist for *L'Humanité*, who perished at the hands of fascist executioners in the war, wrote with every justification that Britain and France tried to put pressure on Berlin and Rome to resume negotiations.[6] Furthermore by holding talks with the USSR Chamberlain and Daladier were trying to deceive the masses who sought to establish friendly relations with Soviet Russia.

Many realistically inclined public figures in Britain and France (including Winston Churchill) went out of their way to demonstrate that the policy of "appeasement" was merely whetting the appetites of the fascist states. Churchill proposed that it was the Soviet Union that should be relied on in order to counteract the growing German threat.

Particularly strong criticism directed at Chamberlain's and Daladier's policy of "appeasing" the fascist aggressors was to come from the old and extremely experienced Lloyd George. He demanded that a conference of all major powers should be convened to discuss the best ways of securing peace.

Chamberlain and Daladier's Double Game

It was in this atmosphere that Chamberlain and Daladier began Anglo-French-Soviet talks and stepped up their double game aimed at achieving an agreement with Nazi Germany. Headlines about the "diplomatic revolution" Chamberlain and Daladier were achieving[7] peppered the bourgeois press in Britain and France and were aimed at veiling the intrigues and treachery of the British and French politicians not only with regard to their relations with the USSR but also vis-à-vis their own peoples.

In the course of these talks the Soviet Union tried to achieve a broad-based agreement with Britain and France that might have held in check the efforts of Nazi Germany to unleash war in Europe. The USSR was anxious to achieve not a hazy but a well-defined agreement providing for mutual assistance in face of aggression and guarantees in the event of attack on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It sought to have signed a detailed military agreement with Britain and France that would specify the form and scale of effective help which the parties would afford each other and the states they guaranteed to protect against any kind of aggression. However the British and French politicians tried to foist upon the Soviet Union various obligations that would have meant that the Soviet Union bore the full brunt of Nazi aggression, while Britain and France would still have a completely free hand and not be tied down by any obligations to help the Soviet Union. The British historian A.J.P. Taylor maintains that "Chamberlain never wanted association with Soviet Russia except on impossible terms." [8]

The Soviet Government saw through these far from subtle machinations and from the outset of the talks countered British and French diplomatic traps with clear, well-defined proposals aimed at establishing a collective security front against fascist aggression and furthering the cause of peace in Europe and the world as a whole.

At that time when the clouds of war were gathering over Poland and Romania the Soviet Union was particularly anxious to call a conference of representatives to whom the threat of war was a most immediate concern—namely Britain, France, Romania, Poland, Turkey and the USSR—so as to clarify the stand of all the participants. [9] It seemed that the aggression of the Nazis against Czechoslovakia ought to have opened even the diehards' eyes to the danger that their policy might have brought to the national interests of Britain. Chamberlain, although famous for never forgetting anything, did not seem to be learning anything either and was still pinning his hopes on a clash between the USSR and Germany, quite convinced that his diplomatic stratagems were infallible. He did not even notice that the threat of war was now closer to the borders of France and Britain than those of the USSR. This explains why the British Government turned down the Soviet proposal as premature.

Instead of calling a conference which might have settled the problem as to how aggression should best be countered, the British Government presented to the Soviet Union on March 21, 1939 a draft for a joint declaration by the USSR, Britain, France, and Poland, paving the way towards consultation by the governments concerned if the political independence of any European state were to come under threat.[10] The author of this draft had been Chamberlain.

The Soviet Government was well aware of the shortcomings of this declaration, which did not specify the ways in which such assistance should be provided or the scale of the armed forces involved. Nevertheless it considered that even such an inadequate declaration could represent at least a minor contribution towards the setting-up of a collective security system and therefore it decided to accept it. Chamberlain and the other British politicians involved preferred a deal with Nazi Germany to talks with the USSR.[11]

At its secret meetings the British Cabinet discussed those questions which were being debated at the Anglo-French-Soviet political and military talks, formulating precise instructions for its diplomatic representatives.

As is clear from the minutes of these secret Cabinet meetings, the line pursued by Chamberlain and Lord Halifax was aimed at leaving Hitler a free hand in Eastern Europe.[12] In other words they hoped to channel fascist aggression eastwards against the Soviet Union. At a meeting of the British Cabinet on May 3, 1939 Chamberlain confided in his colleagues his conviction that Hitler's heart lay in Eastern Europe and that he was not really aspiring to win back Germany's former colonies.[13] The main concern of the British Prime Minister was that Hitler should not think that Great Britain wanted war with Germany, or would refuse to negotiate with him or come to the conclusion that Britain was pursuing a policy aimed at the encirclement of Germany.[14] At this meeting of the British Cabinet Lord Halifax in his turn stressed that the value of Russia as a potential ally was by no means as great as leading members of the Labour Party seemed to think.[15] In making this assertion Halifax was relying on the authority of the British Chiefs of Staff.

Well aware of the views held by Chamberlain and Daladier the British ambassador in Berlin, Henderson, admit-

ted: "From the outset I regarded the Russian negotiations as something which had to be attempted but which lacked all sense of realities." [16] At the time Chamberlain noted in his dairy: "As always, I want to gain time..." [17] He needed this time in order to reach a deal with Nazi Germany.

In view of all this the British diplomats, as had happened on various previous occasions, hurried to go back on their own proposal. On April 1, William Seeds, the British ambassador, informed the Soviet Government (without any substantiation) that Britain considered the question of the declaration as no longer on the agenda. This served to demonstrate yet again that the British declaration had merely been designed to provide an illusion of a rapprochement with the USSR, and that the talks with the Soviet Government had been seen as a means of bringing pressure to bear on Hitler. In actual fact as was pointed out by the moderately Conservative paper, *The Observer*, the policy of the Western democracies had been aimed at encouraging Hitler's "Drang nach Osten". [18]

British and French diplomats had been trying to show Berlin that the talks with the USSR were not really serious and thus resorted to methods of sabotage, procrastination and deferment so that the talks should eventually collapse and thus make it clear to Hitler that the USSR had no allies. The British journal *The New Statesman and Nation* wrote: "At the back of the Chamberlain policy there has always been a belief that in the last resort Hitler's ambitions pointed to the East rather than the West, and that in a German-Russian war Britain might stand aside." [19]

The double game played by the Chamberlain and Daladier governments brought the Anglo-French-Soviet talks to a standstill, which lasted until the middle of April. During that period the fascist states were perpetrating new acts of aggression, leading even the most inveterate members of the Cliveden group to stop and think about the dangerous course they were pursuing.

After Czechoslovakia had been seized, on March 22 Hitler seized from Lithuania the port of Memel (now Klaipeda) and the surrounding territory without even a hint of protest from the imperialist powers. On April 7, 1939 Mussolini gave orders to his Italian troops to invade Albania from the sea and seize the country. Two days later the Italian aggressors entered Tirana, the Albanian capital. Nazi Ger-

many then embarked upon its political blackmail with regard to Poland.

The German fascists were rattling their sabres. The "appeasers" from London and Paris were in a panic: their hopes of making a deal with the aggressors against Soviet Russia had been shattered.

Chamberlain Takes to His Heels

By now it was vital to save the situation and take drastic steps. Feverish activity began in the political world of London and Paris, which in many respects was reminiscent of the atmosphere at the time of the Munich crisis. Chamberlain hurriedly interrupted his holiday which he had been spending in Scotland, abandoned his trout-fishing and hurried immediately to London. An emergency meeting of the Cabinet was held to which leaders of the Opposition were invited. In Gibraltar and Malta ships of the British fleet began to assemble.

Europe was fraught with worry. Belgium and Holland called up reservists; the estuaries of the Schelde and Maas rivers were mined. Constant consultation began between London and Paris on the question of what emergency measures ought to be adopted.

The alarm of the politicians grew still more serious under pressure from the popular masses in Britain and France, who, according to the *Daily Worker*, were making their class enemies quake in Downing Street and the Palais Bourbon.

Against this background the governments of Chamberlain and Daladier had to do something demonstrating to the mass of their electors their resolve and rapid response to the situation. Chamberlain quickly gave a speech to Parliament in which he declared that Britain was giving unilateral guarantees to Romania and Greece (prior to that similar paper guarantees had been given to Poland as well).

Lord Halifax hastened to inform Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in London, that the Cabinet had decided to authorize the British ambassador in Moscow to hold talks with the USSR. Admittedly Halifax also mentioned in a secret telegram to Seeds the difficulties facing Britain and France standing in the way of any close association with the Soviet Government in the system of international collabora-

tion. These difficulties, according to Lord Halifax, arose "not merely from the reluctance of certain governments to be openly associated in any way with the Soviet Union and from any suspicion, real or assumed, that the Soviet Government may have of the intentions of His Majesty's Government and the French Government." [20]

The crux of the matter was not the suspicious behaviour of the Soviet Government but the reluctance of the British and French governments to co-operate closely with the USSR to uphold collective security. Demonstrations of this followed immediately. On April 15, 1939 Chamberlain's government sent a new proposal to the Soviet Union, the provocative nature of which was clear for all to see.

The British Government proposed to the Soviet Government that it make a unilateral declaration to the effect that in the event of an act of aggression against any of the Soviet Union's European neighbours that resisted, that country could count on assistance from the Soviet Union if it desired it. [21] This meant that the Soviet Union was supposed to come to the help of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Poland and Romania in the event of German aggression against them. Yet in carrying out such obligations the Soviet Union would unavoidably find itself in a state of war with Germany. Meanwhile the British guarantee, quite apart from the fact that Britain had no intention of standing by it, only applied to Poland and Romania. This meant that in the event of German aggression through the Baltic states Britain would not give any help to the Soviet Union. Moreover the British plan, which made no provision for mutual assistance between the USSR, Britain and France or for the actual forms and scale of such assistance, did not solve the problem. There was little to choose between the British and French proposals put forward at this time. Daladier and Bonnet also pursued a double-dealing course in the talks.

Soviet diplomats not only succeeded in seeing through the insidious scheming of British diplomats but also countered their actions with a detailed plan for real resistance to Nazi aggression. On April 17 the Soviet Government presented proposals to the British and French governments. Bearing in mind the recommendations already made by Britain and France, the USSR proposed:

"1) Britain, France and the USSR should conclude a 5-10 year agreement on mutual obligations to come imme-

diately to each other's assistance, including military assistance, in the event of aggression against any of the states party to this agreement;

"2) Britain, France and the USSR take it upon themselves to give all possible help, including military help, to those states of Eastern Europe situated between the Baltic and the Black Seas and which border on the Soviet Union ." [22] Britain and France in the shortest time possible must establish the scale and forms of this military assistance to be afforded to each of the countries concerned.

In the course of the next three weeks, when each day was precious for the fight for peace, the British Government kept silent. Yet there was plenty of activity to be observed in British political circles. Lord Halifax was going out of his way to persuade the French Government not to give a separate answer to the Soviet proposals. He went even further than this and instructed the British ambassador in Paris, Sir Eric Phipps, to do everything possible to dissuade France from accepting the Soviet proposals. [23]

At the next secret meeting of the British Cabinet, which took place at the beginning of May, Lord Halifax, contrary to any sort of logic, declared that the three-power pact proposed by the Soviet Union would make war inevitable. [24] On the other hand, according to Halifax, if Britain were to turn down the Soviet proposals, then this would throw Russia into Germany's arms. Home Secretary Hoare also expressed fears regarding the serious consequences that might result from failure of the talks with the USSR.

Some members of the British Cabinet, following Lord Halifax's lead, put forward other proposals; Thomas Inskip, Secretary of State for the Co-ordination of Supply declared that if the British Government were to start out from the assumption that the Soviet Union would not be on their side but at least be neutral, then the Chiefs of Staff held that the advantages to be gained from an alliance with Russia did not exceed the disadvantages of open hostility towards Spain. [25]

In the light of such views expressed by Chamberlain and Lord Halifax there was nothing surprising about the Foreign Secretary's next move at the beginning of May to instruct Seeds not to agree to the new Soviet proposals on the pretext that the time had not yet come to do so. [26] This was announced at the very moment when the fascist states were taking new steps aimed at extending the war.

In a speech on April 28, 1939 in the Reichstag Hitler simultaneously renounced two treaties, the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 and the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact of 1934. On May 22 first steps were taken towards the signing of a military and political alliance between fascist Italy and Germany, the so-called Pact of Steel. All this led to a further deterioration in the political situation in Europe.

Despite the menacing situation, British and French politicians were still conniving at fascist aggression and seeking for ways to come to a deal with Hitler. Chamberlain again announced in Parliament that Britain was ready to take part in talks and "to consider proposals for an exchange of reciprocal assurances with the German Government." At a Cabinet meeting on May 3 Lord Halifax read into a speech made by Hitler the wish to leave the door open for possible future talks with Britain. [27] A conclusion of this sort from the British minister was clearly at odds with the true state of affairs, he was indulging in wishful thinking. The real picture, reflected in the abrogation of the treaties with Britain and Poland, did not in any way illustrate peaceful intentions on the part of Hitler.

Nevertheless Henderson, on behalf of his government, did everything possible to bring Germany back to the table for talks with Britain. He obligingly informed Hitler that the introduction of conscription in Britain was not aimed against Germany and that Britain did not intend to pursue a policy aimed at the encirclement of Germany, as was being reported in the German newspapers. [28]

The introduction of conscription in Britain on April 27, 1939 was only intended as a means of bringing pressure to bear on Germany: to force her to seek a rapprochement with Britain. It was also a means of making the conclusion of an alliance between the USSR, Britain and France seem unnecessary, insofar as France after that move by Britain would allegedly no longer require help from Russia. For this reason, at the meeting of the British Cabinet held on May 7, it was decided to turn down the Soviet proposals. At the same time the text for British counter-proposals was approved.

On May 8 the Chamberlain Government dispatched its answer (identical to the French one) to the Soviet proposals. In their counter-proposals Britain and France completely avoided the important question of the conclusion of a

mutual assistance treaty with the USSR. They only referred to the USSR's unilateral obligations to help Britain and France if either of them were to carry out their obligations as guarantors. Yet these proposals did not contain any obligations for Britain and France to come to the help of the USSR. Moreover, Britain and France when guaranteeing the borders of Poland and Romania had not extended their guarantee to the Baltic states.

In actual fact the British proposals were addressed to Berlin, rather than Moscow. The Germans were being invited to attack the USSR via the Baltic states, in which case British and French neutrality was assured. It was no coincidence that the British proposals were learnt about in Berlin before Moscow. [29]

Such a position adopted by Britain and France could not provide a basis for the conclusion of a meaningful agreement against the aggressors. This could only have been achieved on the basis of the Soviet proposals. Even Churchill, who could not in any way be seen as sympathetic towards the USSR, said: "There can however be no doubt even in the after-light that Britain and France should have accepted the Russian offer, proclaimed the Triple Alliance..." [30]

The Soviet Government was well aware of the implications of the provocative game being played by Britain and France. Instead of a vague unrealistic set of British proposals, the Soviet Government had put forward clear-cut conditions for an agreement between Britain, France and the USSR. The Soviet Government had proposed: "1) the conclusion between Britain, France and the USSR of an effective pact for mutual assistance to combat aggression; 2) a guarantee from the three Great Powers for the states of Central and Eastern Europe threatened by aggression, including Latvia, Estonia and Finland; 3) the conclusion between Britain, France and the USSR of an agreement on the details with regard to the specific forms and scale of the assistance to be afforded to each other and to the states whose borders were being guaranteed." [31]

The Soviet proposals would have provided an effective barrier of peace-loving states against the unleashing of further aggression in Europe. Yet the British Cabinet, at its meeting on May 17 adopted a resolution once again to reject the Soviet proposal for the conclusion of a mutual assistance treaty and for a military pact. Lord Halifax once

again reiterated his view to the effect that the conclusion of an alliance with Russia would make war more likely.[32] France also pursued a policy at this time that was in keeping with the spirit of Munich.

The Secret Memorandum from the Foreign Office

Confirmation of this course being pursued by the British Government is provided by the secret Foreign Office memorandum incorporating the directives from the British Cabinet that was sent to France on May 22, 1939. In it there were consistently outlined the arguments explaining Britain's reluctance to sign a mutual assistance pact with the USSR. The document stated: "A triple pact of mutual assistance between Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union would" imply that "His Majesty's Government had finally given up all hope of arriving at a settlement with Germany and that accordingly they had reached the conclusion that war was inevitable..."[33]

The ministers and the Foreign Office officials had been weighing up whether Britain stood to gain more or lose more from concluding an agreement with the USSR. According to their assumptions the disadvantageous aspects of such an agreement outweighed the advantages. At the end of the memorandum a conclusion was drawn to the effect that in the event of war it would be important to try and draw the Soviet Union into it.

The British and French governments had not entertained even for a moment the idea of combining their military efforts with the USSR in order to repulse the fascist aggressors. Chamberlain made a highly ambiguous statement to the effect that the talks with the Soviet Union had been a bluff and that Hitler had no need to fear that Britain, France and the USSR would set up a united front. In his diary Chamberlain noted that "if dictators [i.e. Hitler and Mussolini.—*Volkov.*] would have a modicum of patience, I can imagine that a way could be found of meeting German claims."[34]

At the end of May 1939 Chamberlain and Daladier embarked upon a new manoeuvre in their talks with the USSR. After meetings that took place in Geneva between representatives of the USSR, Britain and France, William Seeds, the British ambassador in Moscow, together with the French

representative handed to the Soviet Government the text for "new" Anglo-French proposals, which this time were in the form of a draft for a mutual assistance treaty. The formal acceptance of the principle of mutual assistance was, however, made subject to so many conditions that made it virtually meaningless. Once again Britain and France were for all intents and purposes refusing to help the Baltic states in the event of Hitler attacking them.

The "Baltic door" in the event of an attack on the USSR by Hitler thus remained wide open. Moreover there was no mention in the Anglo-French draft of the conclusion of a military agreement, without which the mutual assistance treaty would not have been worth the paper it was written on. All this made the draft inacceptable for the Soviet Union. Once again the Anglo-French proposals gave reason to assume that Britain and France wished to talk about the pact only so as to bring pressure to bear on Berlin and were not really interested in achieving concrete results.

Finding itself with its back against the wall the British Government could think of nothing better to do than to discuss the question as to whether the negotiations should be broken off immediately or else be allowed to drag on for ever. At secret meetings of the Cabinet Lord Halifax expressed on more than one occasion a negative opinion with regard to what he termed the association with the Russian Government. At the following meeting on July 19, 1939 he openly declared that he was ready to break off the negotiations with the USSR, saying that if the negotiations were to prove unsuccessful in the long run it would not give rise to serious alarm and that he was not worried by the prospect of criticism in Parliament if the government were to break off the negotiations with the Soviet Government. [35]

Eventually the government decided to let the uncertain situation continue, to carry on its sabotage of the negotiations.

The Soviet Government however was interested first and foremost in organizing mutual assistance between the USSR, Britain and France in the struggle against fascist aggression in Europe. The Soviet Government made it quite clear that it did not intend to take part in fruitless negotiations on such a pact merely so as to disorientate public opinion or enable the British and French to pursue other political objectives. Still carrying on their determined strug-

gle to set up a system of collective security, the Soviet representatives at the talks submitted their reply to the Anglo-French proposals drawn up in the form of a mutual assistance treaty. The Soviet Government was striving to have a military agreement signed, without which there could be no effective political pact.

The British and French diplomats again rejected the Soviet proposals. Moreover they encouraged the pro-fascist governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to reject the idea of guarantees for them from the great powers.[36]

Chamberlain's reluctance to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union also made itself felt in connection with the trip to Moscow which the Prime Minister himself or a high-ranking member of the Cabinet was due to make. In order to meet Hitler and Mussolini Chamberlain and Lord Halifax had travelled on numerous occasions to Berchtesgaden, Bad-Godesberg and Rome. Yet with the approval of the Cabinet Chamberlain stubbornly refused to travel to Moscow himself and was preventing Lord Halifax or Eden from doing so, although the Soviet Government through its ambassador in London had invited Lord Halifax to come to Moscow as soon as possible in order to complete the negotiations. Chamberlain declared that he did not deem such a proposal to be "desirable."[37] He would not even select a relatively unimportant member of the Cabinet to make such a visit. He eventually sent to Moscow a far from prominent Foreign Office official, Sir William Strang, who had been a keen supporter of the Munich agreement and who was hostile in his attitude towards the USSR.

Strang's arrival in Moscow did nothing to relieve the deadlock in the negotiations. "New" Anglo-French proposals were merely a rehash of the old ones and made subject to such conditions as to be rendered inacceptable from the outset. Most important of all in Moscow, London and Paris it was being pointed out to Soviet representatives that it would not be expedient for a mutual assistance pact and a military agreement to come into force simultaneously. Chamberlain and Daladier did not want a cogent, effective treaty providing for the fight *against* the aggressors. What they wanted was an agreement *with* the very same aggressors. It was not for nothing that Chamberlain said in a frank conversation with Sir Kingsley Wood that he had still not lost hope that he might succeed in avoiding having to sign this pact.[38]

The tactic of procrastination and delay at the negotiations and the slander campaign waged by British and French reactionaries attempting to place the blame for the failure of the negotiations at the door of the USSR could not help but arouse the indignation of the Soviet public. Their response was described by the Soviet statesman Andrei Zhdanov in an article in *Pravda* entitled "The British and French Governments Want Nothing to Do with a Treaty with the USSR Based on Equal Rights." Zhdanov wrote that Britain and France wanted not a meaningful treaty acceptable to the USSR, but merely to talk about such a treaty, so as to make easier their path towards a deal with the aggressor and create an illusion that the USSR was an uncompromising negotiator. [39]

Even certain bourgeois newspapers in Britain and France were writing of Chamberlain's endeavour to steer the fascist avalanche towards the Soviet Union. [40] This meant that all the Soviet Government's efforts to achieve an effective mutual assistance pact based on equal rights and consolidated by a military agreement met with stubborn opposition from British and French politicians.

The Clouds of War Gather

By the end of the summer of 1939 the international situation was more tense than ever. The real threat of a Nazi attack on Poland was in the air. The question as to whether or not the holocaust of world war would be set alight by Germany depended on the outcome of the Anglo-French-Soviet talks and whether or not the major powers in Europe set up a united front in the struggle against the fascist aggressors.

In one of the reports sent to Paris by Robert Coulondre, the French ambassador in Berlin, in June 1939 it was pointed out that if Hitler were to know that he would have to fight not only the Western powers but Russia as well, then he would be more likely to step down over Poland than to condemn his country, party and himself to ultimate defeat and downfall. According to Coulondre if the Anglo-Russian negotiations dragged on it was not impossible that in the next few weeks Hitler would make a lightning grab for Danzig.

The Nazis however were quite sure (as Ribbentrop in-

formed Hungarian ministers) that in the event of war Britain would cold-bloodedly abandon Poland to its fate. While making ready for their attack on Poland, the Nazis were counting on Britain and France betraying their ally and isolating the USSR.

In its efforts to avert war in Europe which would inevitably develop into a World War, the Soviet Government turned to the governments of Britain and France with a proposal that detailed military talks should begin in Moscow to work out how the struggle against a possible aggressor should be conducted. The USSR considered it essential to carry on parallel talks to discuss both political and military issues so as not to lose time and to elaborate a document which would oblige Britain and France to supply armed forces of a specific size to come to the help of the victim of possible aggression.

On July 25 Britain and France agreed to send military missions to Moscow.[41] Before they set off however the British and French politicians agreed in Paris in advance that the French and British missions would set off to Moscow simultaneously and they also agreed upon how they would conduct themselves at the talks in accordance with prearranged instructions. In order to work out a common course of action in the talks with the USSR, a meeting of high-ranking British and French generals was held in Paris—General Gamelin, General Doumenc and General Ismay. The missions planned to travel first by train through Germany, then by air, then on a warship and finally they decided that they would leave for Moscow on a slow steamer since "if Missions", it was alleged, "arrived by method of travel which might appear spectacular, any hitch or dragging out of discussions might be given correspondingly more serious appearance."[42]

These tactics indulged in by the British and French missions, who were merely playing at negotiations, even provided for a secret system of signalling from British to French and vice versa. If during the negotiations a question was raised in connection with which it was important that the British and French positions be brought in line, or if any of the British and French negotiators were to let their tongues run away with them, it was agreed that someone should start scratching the end of their nose in as natural a way as possible, so as not to arouse the suspicion of the Russians.[43] Such a "signalling system" was in no way

compatible with the basic ethics of vital interstate negotiations on the issue of war and peace.

The political negotiations between the USSR, Britain and France were meant to take place parallel to a series of military discussions. Entirely due to the fault of Britain and France however no military talks were reopened.

After accepting, under pressure from public opinion, the Soviet proposal for talks between military missions, Britain and France, as subsequent events were to show, did everything possible to disrupt such talks. This position on the part of Britain in particular could be explained by the fact that secret Anglo-German negotiations were being held in London at the same time, which Chamberlain regarded as crucially important. On the very brink of war he was still carrying on the criminal manoeuvres of his double game. In the private pages of his diary Chamberlain admitted that the Anglo-Soviet talks were doomed to fail, but that it would be wrong to hurry with such an outcome: to him it was important to make them appear successful so that he might be able to exert pressure on Germany. "

Against this background of Britain's secret dealings with Germany backstage it was inevitable that the political and military talks in Moscow should fail.

The fact that the British politicians did not take seriously the talks held in Moscow was clear from the composition of the military missions sent by Britain and France, which consisted either of retired generals or admirals or men who only occupied relatively unimportant posts. The aged admiral, Sir Reginald Drax, a former president of the Royal Naval College at Greenwhich then in command of H. M. Naval Base in Portsmouth, had been selected to lead the British military mission. He was close to the court, supported Chamberlain; he was stubborn and far from quick on the uptake. On more than one occasion in his speeches he called for war against the USSR. The other members of the British mission were of the same ilk: Air-Admiral Charles Burnett, an old campaigner but an aviator rather than a strategist, and then a combatant officer, Major-General Heywood.

The French military mission was headed by General Doumenc, no longer in his first youth, who was not a well-known figure. The French mission also included a naval officer, Captain Willaume, a professor from the naval college, and General Valin, the air attaché at the embassy in

Warsaw, a major from the artillery and several junior officers. The Soviet military mission, on the other hand, was made up of prominent military chiefs. The delegation was headed by People's Commissar for Defence Kliment Voroshilov and the other members included Chief of General Staff of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army Boris Shaposhnikov, and People's Commissar for the Navy, Nikolai Kuznetsov, along with other high-ranking figures.

Despite the urgency for these talks the joint Anglo-French delegation left London on August 5 and took six days to reach Leningrad. This slow progress was, as emerged in the course of the negotiations, far from accidental.

Admirals and Generals without Any Authority

At the first plenary session of the talks between the military missions from the USSR, Britain and France, which took place in Moscow on August 12, the following picture was to emerge: the Soviet delegation had been given the authority to negotiate with the British and French military missions and to sign a military agreement covering questions connected with the organization of the defence of Britain, France and the USSR in the face of aggression in Europe. [45] General Doumenc, the head of the French delegation, on the other hand, had a far from precise mandate on how to conduct the negotiations, while Admiral Drax, the head of the British delegation, had no written authority for negotiation at all. In this embarrassing situation Admiral Drax did admittedly try to find a way out, saying that if it were considered convenient to transfer the negotiations to London then he would be provided with all the authority necessary in the circumstances.

The head of the Soviet delegation, much to the amusement of all present, pointed out that it was easier to take papers from London to Moscow than for such a large gathering to travel to London. [46]

The lack of any powers for the British delegation made it clear once again what kind of criminal game Chamberlain's government was playing and that it did not really seek any kind of agreement with the USSR. A.J.P. Taylor was to point out: "The British government, in fact, were not interested in solid military cooperation with Soviet Russia." [47]

Only after several demands from the Soviet side did Admiral Drax present far from clear credentials as to his authority. Even these he only received at the very end of the negotiations when there was no longer any real need for them.

Neither the British nor the French military missions had any real authority to sign a military agreement. It emerged that they had been sent not so as to draw up with all possible speed a mutual assistance pact and a military agreement with the USSR, but so that these matters might be aired and thus mask the other secret objectives that were being pursued.

These intentions can be gleaned from the secret minutes of the meeting of the British Cabinet which took place on July 26, 1939. Chamberlain, as he sent the military mission off to the USSR, demanded from its members that they should not begin the military negotiations with Russia by letting the Russians gain information about Britain's plans. On the contrary they were encouraged to persuade the Russians to inform British representatives of what Russia might do to help Poland for example. [48]

Similar instructions were given by leading French politicians to the members of their mission.

At the above-mentioned meeting of the British Cabinet Lord Halifax came forward with his famous instruction for the British military delegation calling upon them to act as slowly as possible. Lord Halifax made no secret of the fact that the negotiations were intended to last for a very long time. Implementing in practice the instructions they had received from their political leaders in Britain and France, the British and French Chiefs of Staff entrusted their delegations with tasks that came under the heading of intelligence gathering.

"Conduct Negotiations as Slowly as Possible"

The special secret instructions for the British delegation containing 117 points testify eloquently to the secret aims of the British and French politicians who sent the delegations to Moscow. These points define the nature of the negotiations conducted by what for all intents and purposes was a joint Anglo-French delegation, as does the similar set of instructions given to the French delegation

The delegations were called upon not to hurry with the conduct of the military talks, at least until such time as a political agreement had been reached. Point 8 of the British instructions made it clear that until then "the delegation should ... go very slowly with the conversations, watching the progress of the political negotiations and keeping in very close touch with His Majesty's Ambassador." [49] Tragically for the future of the peoples of Europe the British and French delegations tried to carry out this instruction to the letter.

No less telling point is 15 which read: "The British Government is unwilling to enter into any detailed commitments which are likely to tie our hands in all circumstances." [50]

The instructions for the French military delegation at the talks were drawn up on July 27, 1939 and signed by General Gamelin. This fact was recorded by General Beaufre in his memoires: at the time he had been only a captain but nevertheless a member of the French military mission in Moscow who took part in the talks. [51]

In secret instructions on the programme for the mission to follow that were issued to General Doumenc, it was made clear that if the USSR came to accept the position adopted by Britain, it would be drawn into the conflict.

The instructions laid down that the Soviet Union should afford military assistance to Britain, France and their allies in any war with Germany. It was also taken for granted that in the Balkans Soviet armed forces would work together with the Turks.

There was not a single word in Gamelin's instructions about forming an effective military alliance that would involve the USSR, Britain and France.

At a time when Nazi Germany was ready to unleash the Second World War, a mere twenty days in fact after those military talks began, issuing instructions of this sort to military delegations was a crime before the whole of humanity.

The policy of dragging out and essentially disrupting the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations and the reluctance of Britain and France to take on themselves any clearly defined military obligations were the distinguishing features of the position adopted by the British and French delegates during the talks in Moscow. On the Western Front Britain and France thought that all they would have to do would be

to "contain considerable German forces." [52] They were ready to fight using the manpower of the Soviet Union, after bringing it into conflict with Nazi Germany.

For the Soviet Government it was becoming increasingly clear that Chamberlain and Daladier did not wish to conclude an effective mutual assistance pact or a military agreement. Nevertheless it made every possible effort to achieve an agreement with Britain and France and to check the hand of the fascist aggressors that was being brandished over Europe.

The representatives of the USSR, Britain and France had to outline at these talks the military plans of their governments and Chiefs of Staff "concerning such measures as were designed in their opinion to secure effective organization of the defence of the negotiating countries, i.e., Britain, France and the Soviet Union." [53] The Soviet military mission in particular considered it quite correct and expedient for the British and French military missions to present a joint plan for the defence of the negotiating countries from aggression in Europe. This plan, the Soviet mission assumed, ought to specify the number of troops to be used by the three powers, the material resources to be made available and the direction in which the forces in the field would move to ensure the defence of the USSR, Britain and France. [54]

As was to emerge in the course of the meetings however the British and French missions had not made any military plans at all. Instead of that the British and French military missions suggested that abstract "general aims" and "general principles" for military cooperation involving Britain, France and the USSR be discussed.

Britain Will Field Six Divisions

In the course of the military negotiations the Soviet mission raised the question as to the size of the armed forces which were to be made available immediately by the parties to a military agreement in the event of aggression.

The French named what was clearly an exaggerated figure—110 divisions. The British declared that in the event of war they would be able to field five infantry divisions and one motorized division. By the first stage of the war the British were planning to mobilize sixteen divisions.

Later it was planned to mobilize another 16 divisions but at the time of those talks the second sixteen did not yet exist, nor were arms or equipment available for them. [55] Of the 3,000 first-line aircraft which the British possessed, they intended to use in the war only one thousand. The Soviet Union declared it was ready to send to the front 120 infantry divisions and 16 cavalry divisions to fight the fascist aggressor and that it had 5,000 pieces of heavy artillery, between nine and ten thousand tanks and between 5,000 and 5,500 military aircraft. [56]

On behalf of the Soviet High Command, B. M. Shaposhnikov from the Soviet delegation presented the other delegates with a detailed military plan outlining three possible variants for joint action on the part of the armed forces of Britain, France and the USSR in the event of fascist aggression in Europe.

Variant 1: was designed for the repulse of an attack by a bloc of aggressors directed against Britain and France. In such a case the USSR would field seventy per cent of those armed forces which Britain and France would be sending out directly against Germany.

Variant 2: provided for military action to be carried out if the German aggression should be directed against Poland and Romania. In such a situation Poland and Romania would send out to the front all their armed forces, while Britain and France would have to come to their assistance and immediately declare war on the aggressor. The USSR would take upon itself the obligation to participate in these hostilities and field 100 per cent of those armed forces which Britain and France would be sending out against Germany.

Variant 3: provided for the situation when the main aggressor, Germany, attacked the USSR by way of Finnish, Estonian and Latvian territory. In that case France and Britain would be obliged to declare war on the aggressor or aggressors immediately and to send to the front 70 per cent of the troops fielded by the USSR. [57]

It was quite clear that insofar as the USSR at that time did not have any common border with Germany, it could help Britain, France, Poland and Romania in the event of war, only if Soviet troops were allowed through Polish or Romanian territory. If this point was not accepted by the other missions, then the talks became quite futile. The Polish Government, however, egged on by London, declared that it would not accept help from the USSR.

The Polish reactionaries, betraying their country as they did so, preferred to let it be enslaved by the Germans than to maintain friendly relations with the USSR. The Polish politicians knew from the British and French High Command that aggression in Europe from Nazi Germany was imminent and that Poland was bound to be the first victim. She could only be saved if agreement were reached between Britain, France and the USSR on the subject of how to bridle the aggressors. The French military attaché in the USSR, Colonel Palasse, declared that if France had concluded an agreement with the USSR, Hitler would not have done anything. [58]

During the Moscow talks the USSR sincerely and consistently sought to secure an agreement with Britain and France. Politicians and military leaders in the Western pow ers could not help but appreciate this. The French Prime Minister Daladier in a conversation with the US ambassador in France, William Bullitt, said that the Soviet representatives "were genuinely eager to come to a definite agreement." [59] William Seeds, the British ambassador in Moscow, relayed similar information to Lord Halifax in London writing that all indications were to show that Soviet military negotiators were really out for business. [60] On his return from Moscow to London, Strang reported that the Russians viewed the military negotiations seriously and that concrete results could be achieved.

Chamberlain and Daladier, on the other hand, never gave any serious thought to a real agreement with the Soviet Union, since their actual objectives were quite different ones. A policy of the kind Britain and France were pursuing could not fail to bring about the collapse of the Anglo-French-Soviet political and military talks, and indeed did just that.

In an interview given to a journalist from the newspaper *Izvestiya* Voroshilov described the reason for the failure of the Moscow military talks with France and Britain as follows: "The Soviet military mission held that the USSR, since it does not have a common border with the aggressor, would only be able to afford assistance to France, Britain and Poland on condition that its forces were allowed through Polish territory. . . .

"Despite the obvious correctness of such a position, the French and British military missions failed to go along with this position adopted by the Soviet mission, and the Polish

Government openly declared that it did not need and would not accept military help from the USSR.

"This circumstance made military cooperation between the Soviet Union and the other countries impossible. Herein lay the crux of the disagreement and this is what led to the breakdown of the negotiations." [61]

Behind the Scenes at the Moscow Talks

In the summer of 1939 when the British and French governments deliberately dragged out the Moscow negotiations and when it seemed that the isolation of the USSR within the field of foreign policy had been achieved, Chamberlain declared that Britain was more capable of making a good ally than the Soviet Union, given that she had already reached agreements with a number of countries in Europe. He made it clear to Hitler on a number of occasions that he wished to make a deal with Germany. In a speech in Parliament Lord Halifax declared that any of Germans' claims were "open to consideration round a table" and that "His Majesty's Government are not only willing but anxious to explore the whole problem of economic *Lebensraum*, not only for Germany but for everybody, for all European nations..." [62] Lord Halifax and those who shared his views counted on Germany finding more such *Lebensraum* at the expense of the USSR. This was a direct appeal for negotiations to be opened to discuss the repartition of the world and spheres of influence. The Nazis were not slow in responding.

In June 1939 in an atmosphere of the utmost secrecy a series of Anglo-German meetings began, aimed at the same old objective—securing a broad-scale Anglo-German deal and the channelling of German aggression against the USSR.

At the first secret meeting held in London on June 19 Britain was represented by the Secretary of State for Trade, Robert Hudson, and Chamberlain's confidant and advisor Horace Wilson. Germany was represented by a Nazi official Wohltat, a prominent expert on economic issues and responsible for top priority missions. The content of these negotiations is still buried in the hidden recesses of the diplomatic archives. All that is known about them is that Wohltat proposed to Wilson that a meeting between British

politicians and Hitler should take place in order to discuss political, military and economic issues. The first meetings between the fascist emissary and the British politicians were of an exploratory nature reminiscent of a diplomatic probe.

In July 1939 Wohltat visited London a second time ostensibly in order to attend the International Whale Fishing Conference. On this occasion Wohltat, the German ambassador in London Dirksen and the diplomatic intelligence officer Theodor Kordt, working as a counsellor at the German embassy, had secret meetings with political figures such as Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, and once again with the Secretary of State for Trade, Robert Hudson. Wohltat talked to Horace Wilson, who had offered him the chance to meet Prime Minister Chamberlain, but Wohltat preferred not to accept this offer. Buxton, head of the Labour Party's information office in the House of Commons, whose job it was to formulate answers to political questions for the Labour Members, also had secret talks with representatives of Nazi Germany, as did Richard A. Butler, then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and Lord Kemsley, a powerful capitalist and newspaper magnate.

British diplomats thoroughly prepared for these secret meetings with the Germans; they drew up a balanced plan approved by Chamberlain and other members of the Cabinet. Hudson and Wilson presented Wohltat with the plan of a far-reaching Anglo-German anti-Soviet political, military and economic deal.

The programme of action that these prominent British public figures were proposing consisted first and foremost in the conclusion of a non-aggression pact, to be supplemented by a pact providing for non-intervention "which was to include a delimitation of the spheres of the Great Powers, in particular as between Britain and Germany." [63] Britain submitted to Germany a treacherous plan for an amicable partition of the world: Hudson pointed out among other things that "there were still three big regions in the world where Germany and England could find opportunities for activities: the British Empire, China and Russia." [64]

British representatives at these secret talks assured Wohltat that if some sort of Anglo-German entente were to be reached the British Government would then be completely absolved "from the commitments to which it was now pledged by the guarantees to Poland, Turkey, etc..." [65] The

British politicians were ready to abandon Poland to Hitler for him to tear apart and other states as well, thus trampling on the "guarantees" they had only just given.

Wohltat asked Wilson if the British Government was ready to discuss other questions, to which Wilson replied: "The Führer had only to take a sheet of paper and jot down his points; the British Government would be prepared to discuss them." [66]

In a secret discussion on July 29, 1939 between Roden Buxton and Kordt, the former disclosed the anti-Soviet essence of the planned Anglo-German agreement, in accordance with which Germany would not intervene in the affairs of the British Empire, while Britain in her turn promised to leave Germany a free hand in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. In her efforts to secure this deal with the fascist aggressors, Britain promised to halt the negotiations to conclude a pact with the Soviet Union which were then going on in Moscow.

Kordt, the diplomatic intelligence officer, knew quite well that Roden Buxton was not just discussing these matters with him as a private individual, although the latter kept trying to assure him of the opposite. Buxton was calling for a reopening of talks with Germany, for a return to secret diplomacy, ruling out any role for public opinion. It was with good reason that this particular approach was being taken for British politicians were wary of the anger of the popular masses. On the other hand, they were also loath to be exposed as conspiring with the Nazis. This is borne out by an admission made by Wilson to Dirksen in a discussion that took place on August 3, 1939. He spoke of the great risk Chamberlain would incur by starting secret or what he called "confidential" negotiations with the German Government. "If anything about them were to leak out there would be a great scandal, and Chamberlain would probably be forced to resign." [67]

In addition Wilson also assured Dirksen that the talks going on with the USSR "were only a subsidiary means, which would cease to be operative as soon as agreement with Germany, the all-important objective worth striving for, had been really attained." [68]

Before Dirksen went on leave on August 9, 1939 he had a secret meeting with Halifax. Although Nazi Germany was ready at any time to light the fires of war in Europe Lord Halifax as before pressed for an agreement with that

country, obligingly promising to discuss Germany's demands and claims. Lord Halifax also hinted quite clearly at Britain's readiness to betray Poland, ostensibly in order to avoid conflict with Germany.

At the same time Anglo-German meetings were going on at other levels as well. At the beginning of August 1939 for instance, secret talks were conducted between British industrialists and financiers Lord Haldane, George Spencer and Goering. The middleman between the parties was Goering's relative, the Swedish industrialist Birger Dahlerus. The meeting between these prominent Englishmen and Germans took place at the estate belonging to Dahlerus' wife in Schleswig-Holstein. They were designed to prepare the ground for a conference of British and German politicians with the possible participation of France and Italy, but without the USSR or Poland. [69]

This new treachery in the spirit of Munich was being prepared on this occasion at the expense of the USSR and Poland. British representatives sent a memorandum to Hitler that had been approved by Chamberlain. German representatives raised the question as to a new partition of the world. At this point Goering began scaring the British delegates with the threat of war in the West and did everything he could to have the Anglo-French-Soviet talks broken off. [70] Goering declared that if Britain were to break off the talks with the USSR this would provide a basis for an Anglo-German rapprochement, while the conclusion of a pact with Soviet Russia would stand in the way of an Anglo-German conference being convened. The German diplomats made every effort to obstruct the signing of an Anglo-French-Soviet agreement. Only the excessive nature of the German demands, that constituted a direct threat to British interests, and the differences between the imperialist powers prevented these preliminary talks from bearing fruit.

Yet right up until the beginning of the war British and French politicians were hoping for a deal with Germany to be achieved by trading the interests and sovereignty of other countries. On August 16 a meeting took place between RAF officer Baron de Ropp and Ribbentrop in Berlin, at which the former announced: "It was absurd for Germany and Britain to engage in a life and death combat on account of the Poles. As things were, the result could only be the destruction of each other's air forces, and, at the end of such a war, the destruction of the whole of

European civilization, leaving Russia with her forces intact as the only beneficiary." [71]

The growing differences between Britain and Germany, on the one hand, and France and Germany, on the other, prevented the formation of an Anglo-French-German bloc. This was to a large extent thanks to the skill of Soviet diplomats who disrupted the plans of those responsible for Munich, who were so anxious to see war break out between Germany and the USSR. Persuaded once and for all that Chamberlain and Daladier were reluctant to conclude a mutual assistance pact with the USSR and to set up a front of collective security to repulse the aggressors the Soviet Government was compelled to seek a new option and accept the German proposal for the signing of a Non-Aggression Pact. The Soviet Union was faced by a dilemma: it could either, in the interests of self-defence, accept the German proposal for the conclusion of a Non-Aggression Pact and thus win more time for its preparations to repulse the inevitable fascist aggression, or it could turn down the proposal and allow the instigators of war to draw the USSR into hostilities with Germany immediately, in conditions that would be disadvantageous for the Soviet Union. The Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government "took the decision to conclude a Non-Aggression Pact with Germany. This of course was a decision into which they had been forced." [72] On August 20, 1939 the German Government made another attempt (similar attempts had been undertaken on more than one occasion by Germany since the spring of that year) to reach agreement with the USSR. The Soviet Government received a telegram asking it to welcome "the Minister for Foreign Affairs on Tuesday August 22, or at the very latest August 23. The Reichsminister will be invested with all due authority to draw up and sign the Non-Aggression Pact." [73]

In this difficult international situation when in the summer of 1939 Japan had attacked the Mongolian People's Republic and the Red Army was already fighting grim battles against the Japanese Army to assist the Mongolian people, and when Britain and France, after breaking off negotiations with the USSR, were holding secret talks with the fascist leaders, the Soviet Government accepted the German proposal and concluded the Non-Aggression Pact with her on August 23, 1939. Given the blatantly hostile policy of Britain and France, a German attack on the USSR

could have turned into a "crusade" of the capitalist countries against the Soviet state. The USSR thus put a stop to the attempts being made to settle differences between the imperialist powers at the expense of the Soviet Union.

The Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations ended in failure not because the USSR had concluded a non-aggression pact with Germany, as bourgeois politicians and distorters of history allege. On the contrary, the pact was concluded because the Moscow talks had been broken off by Britain and France and it had become clearly impossible to reach an agreement with them.

If Britain and France had wanted to conclude a treaty with the USSR to further the fight for peace, nothing would have prevented them from doing that even after August 23, 1939, since the Soviet Union had only signed a non-aggression pact, not an alliance.[74] The Soviet Government was ready to carry on talking to Britain and France, yet the latter were not prepared to do so and recalled their missions from Moscow.[75] The anti-Soviet course pursued by Chamberlain and Daladier, and the ruling circles in Britain and France whom they represented, proved in practice to be a betrayal of the national interests of those countries and the world as a whole and to have paved the way for the unleashing of the Second World War by the fascist states.

Epilogue

After the Great October Revolution in Russia the question as to the relations between the world's first socialist state and the capitalist camp became the burning issue in contemporary politics. The military intervention during the years of the Civil War, the Entente's sorties against the young Soviet Republic, attempts to bring Soviet Russia to her knees by means of overt, and sometimes camouflaged, intervention on the part of the imperialist countries of the Entente and the United States, the actions of Russian counterrevolutionary forces and blockades all ended in humiliating failure.

After the failure of the intervention and in the period of the transition from war to peace, imperialist circles in Britain, the USA, France and other states began intensively preparing new anti-Soviet military campaigns, trying in every possible way to undermine the world's first socialist state. The threat of aggression against the USSR became particularly serious after the German fascists had come to power in 1933.

In the early thirties the change in the political and military balance of power between the imperialist states that was rooted in the Versailles principles accepted by the victors in Europe and the United States meant that the imperialist predators such as Nazi Germany and militarist Japan felt themselves strong enough to raise the issue of the new partition of the world to suit the growing economic, financial and military might of their states. Despite the marked exacerbation of differences between Britain and Germany, France and Germany, Italy and France, Japan and America the imperialists of Britain, the United States, France and their true masters—the monopolists and bank-

ers from the City and Wall Street, who had enabled the military and industrial potential of Germany and Japan to recover from the ruins by pouring enormous funds into the development of their industry—endeavoured to direct the combined forces of the capitalist camp into the fight against the Soviet state.

In their turn the German fascists, initially masking their plans to achieve world domination, frightened the peoples of Europe with the bogey of communism and called for a "crusade" against the USSR. The governments of Baldwin and Chamberlain in Britain and Daladier and Pierre Laval in France, instead of implementing a policy of collective security and holding the fascist aggressors in check (the objective for which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union fought tirelessly, as did Soviet diplomats right up until the Second World War) pursued a policy of so-called non-intervention aimed at directing German aggression eastwards and Japan aggression westwards against the USSR.

This was the policy which led up to the Munich disaster in Europe and similar betrayals in Asia, which was the culmination of the connivance vis-à-vis the aggressors and which was pursued by the ruling circles of the Western powers by various methods. The remilitarization of Nazi Germany, the Pact of Four, signed in Rome in 1933, the Anglo-German Naval agreement, the remilitarization of the Rheinland, the encouragement for aggression by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy and militarist Japan, the breakdown of Anglo-French-Soviet political and military negotiations were all links in a single chain of anti-Soviet policy pursued by the imperialists worldwide. This was a policy which undermined all the anti-fascist forces in Europe and made the unleashing of the Second World War inevitable. *Pravda* (on August 31, 1979) underlined the fact that "Munich opened the door for Hitler's aggression."

In the *History of the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War* it is pointed out that "the whole history of the prelude to the Second World War provides a striking picture of how the narrow-mindedness of the reactionary bourgeoisie and its blind hatred for communism led many European states to a terrible catastrophe and to their enslavement at the hands of Nazi and fascist conquerors." [1]

Unfortunately there are some people in the West who appear to have forgotten the tragic lesson to be learnt from

the history of the Second World War that cost mankind so dear.

At the present time reactionary imperialist circles are again attempting to form an aggressive alliance, a potential Washington-Tokyo-Seoul triangle is only too reminiscent of the thirties' triangle Berlin-Rome-Tokyo.

History has many lessons to teach us. The peoples of many countries had to pay too high a price for the short-sighted policy of bourgeois ruling circles in the West on the eve of the Second World War.

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